No. 299 / MARCH 1998

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

- Defending the future
- Cheating the chiefs – Ghana's new homeless
- Guarding the gems – the dogs of war
- Why the earth moves for men not women

Spotlight on Mining

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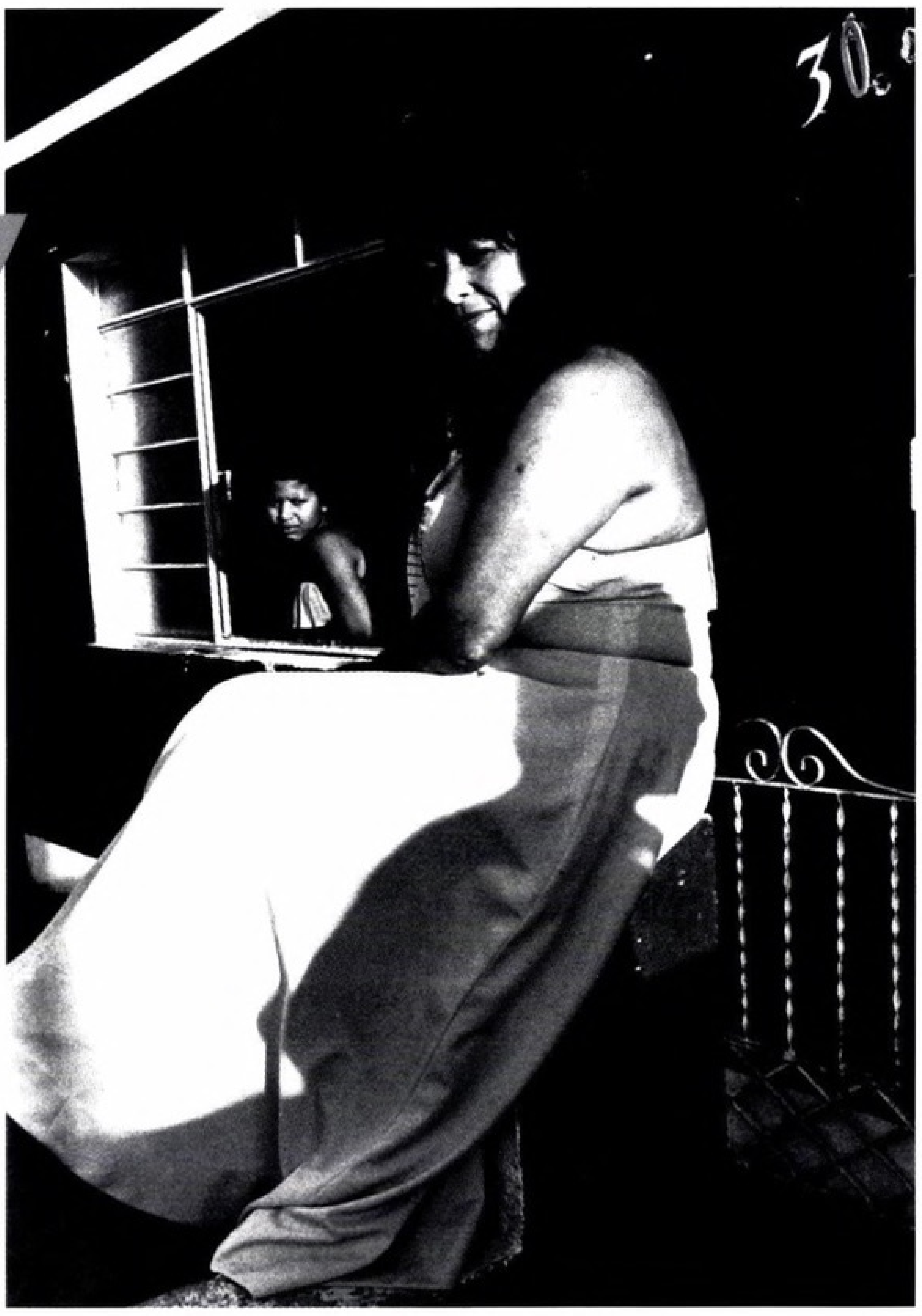
◆

THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT MONTH

The Body

The world made flesh


CHRISTOPH HENNING

Next month's issue of the **NI** looks at 'the body' – your body, my body, everybody's body.

We are very interested in bodies. And we like to think we are at least in control of our own. Not quite so. Look at 'the body' and you can see how controversial issues of health, wealth, gender, culture, class and race are played out in the world today.

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◆ **The organs bazaar** – A shocking report on the booming global traffic in transplant organs, often without the consent of 'donors'.

◆ **Body politics** – Got a problem? Blame your genes. The hunt's on for the genetic cause of everything, from alcoholism to homelessness.

◆ **The third sex** – How sure can you be of your gender? An estimated four per cent of babies are born with an 'intersex' condition.

◆ **Sacred and profane** – The body as a zone of self-expression.

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◆ **Of human bondage** – Selling our bodies to the global labour market.

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The **New Internationalist (NI)** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed:
Accounts: Peter Browne
Administration: Véronique Szerauc.
Design: Alan Hughes, Andrew Kokotka, Ian Nixon.
Editorial: Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Nikki van der Gaag, David Ransom, Anouk Ride.
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Publications editor: Troth Wells.
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The **NI** Website:

http://www.newint.org/

The **NI** is published monthly except that the January and February issues are combined into one bumper issue.

The Independent News Collective is an association of radical and alternative publishers. INK publications cover issues of social, political and personal change, issues which are often neglected by the mainstream media. INK enables its members to cooperate on distribution, marketing and publicity. New Internationalist Magazine is an INK member.

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SUBSCRIPTION OFFICES AND ANNUAL PRICES

UK: PO Box 79, Hertford, SG14 1AQ Tel: (01992) 822899 Fax: (0171) 830 8585 E-mail: subscriptions@newint.org. *Individuals £24.85 p.a.; £6.85 qtly. Institutions £50. Student/Unwaged £14.70 (please telephone for further information).*

Republic of Ireland: 9 Upper Fitzwilliam St, FREEPOST, Dublin 2. Tel: (0044) 1708 381222 Fax: (0044) 1708 379562. *Individuals IR £29.85 p.a.; Institutions IR £55 p.a.*

Canada: 35 Riviera Dr., Unit 17, Markham, ON L3R 8N4. Tel: (905) 946-0407 Fax: (905) 946-0410. E-mail: magazine@indas.on.ca *Individuals 1 yr – $38.50 (includes GST), in NF, NS, NB $41.38 (includes HST); Institutions 1 yr – $64.20 (includes GST) in NF, NS, NB $69.00 (includes HST); Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60;* GST Reg No R121784854.

United States: PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. Tel: (905) 946 0407. Fax: (905) 946 0410. E-mail: magazine@indas.on.ca *Individuals 1 yr – $35.98 Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60; Institutions 1 yr – $60.*

Australia and PNG: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A., 5000. Tel: (08) 8232 1563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887. *Individuals A$56.40.*

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Rest of the World: PO Box 79, Hertford, SG14 1AQ UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1992 822899. *Individuals £29.85 p.a.; £8.50 qtly. Institutions £55 p.a.* Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or UK Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.

Editorial and Advertising Offices

Editorial: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1865 728181. Fax: (0044) or (0)1865 793152. E-mail: ni@newint.org **Advertising:** Tel/Fax: (0044) or (0) 01372 276233.

Canada/US Editorial: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel: (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435. E-mail: nican@web.net **Advertising:** Tel: (902) 421 7022 Fax: (902) 425 0166.

Australia: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel: (08) 82321563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887. E-mail: brianl@caa.org.au

Print and Distribution

Origination: Graphic Facilities, London UK.

Printed on environmentally friendly paper by Warners Midlands plc, UK.

News trade distributor: COMAG Specialist Division, Mercury Centre, Central Way, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 0RX, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 181 844 1000. Fax: (0044) or (0) 181 751 2666.

North America. Publications Contract 101400. Postage Paid at Toronto. Periodicals postage paid at Lewiston, NY. (USPS 329-770) US Post-master: send address changes to: New Internationalist, PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092.

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Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index, CPI CD-ROM, CPI Online, the Canadian Magazine Index, CBCA OnDisc and the Alternative Press Index.

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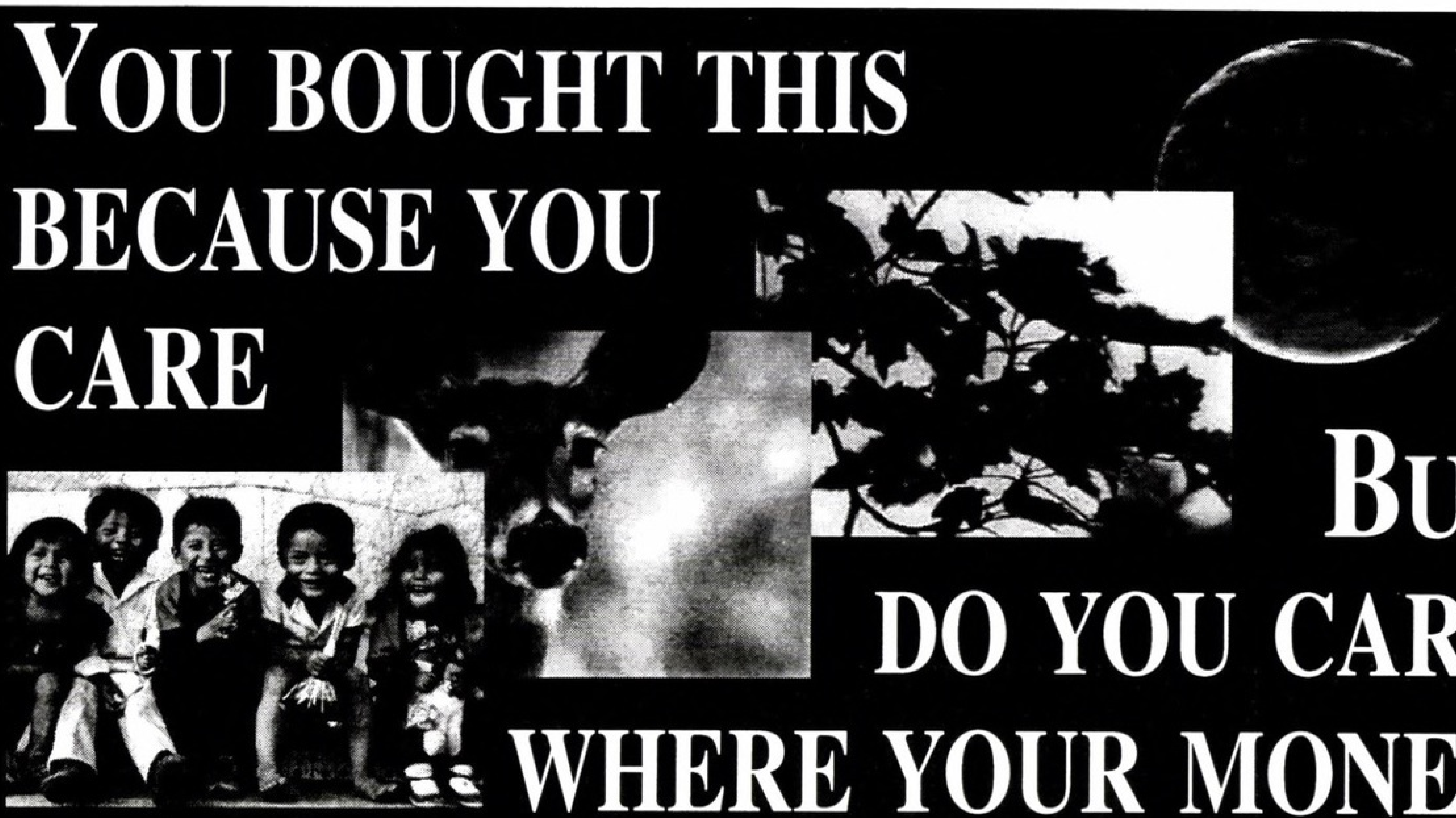
ISSN 03050 9529



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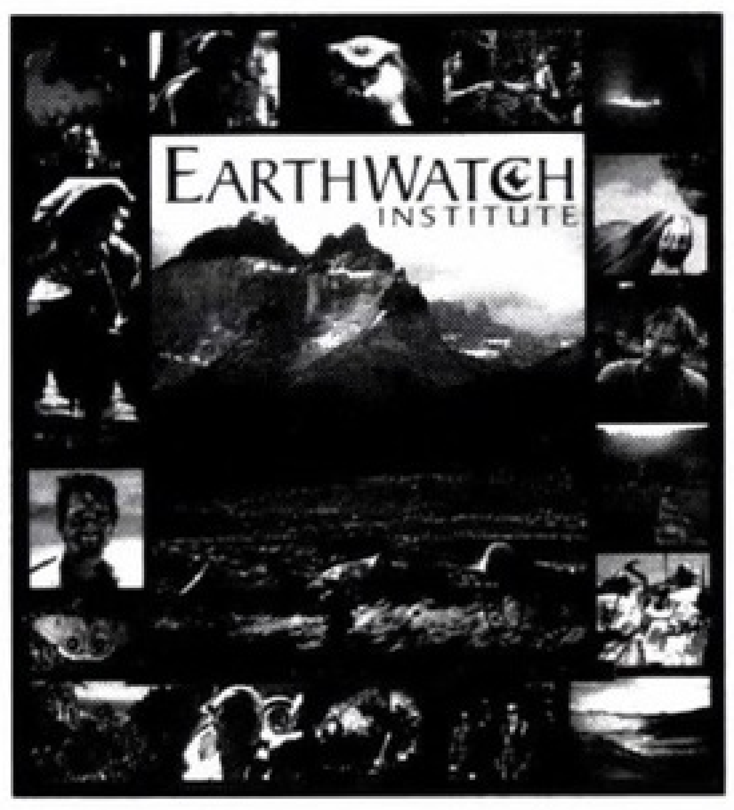

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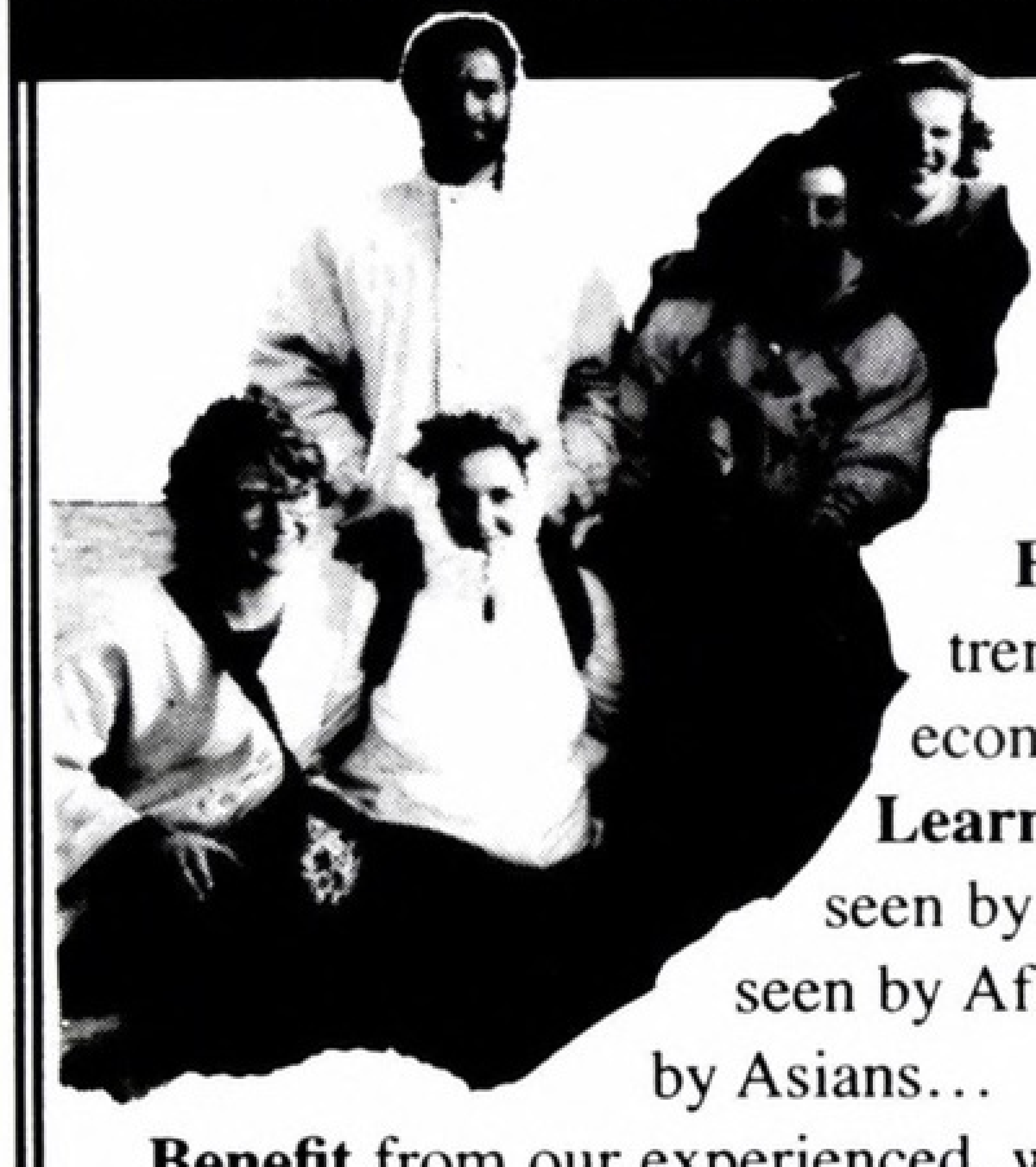

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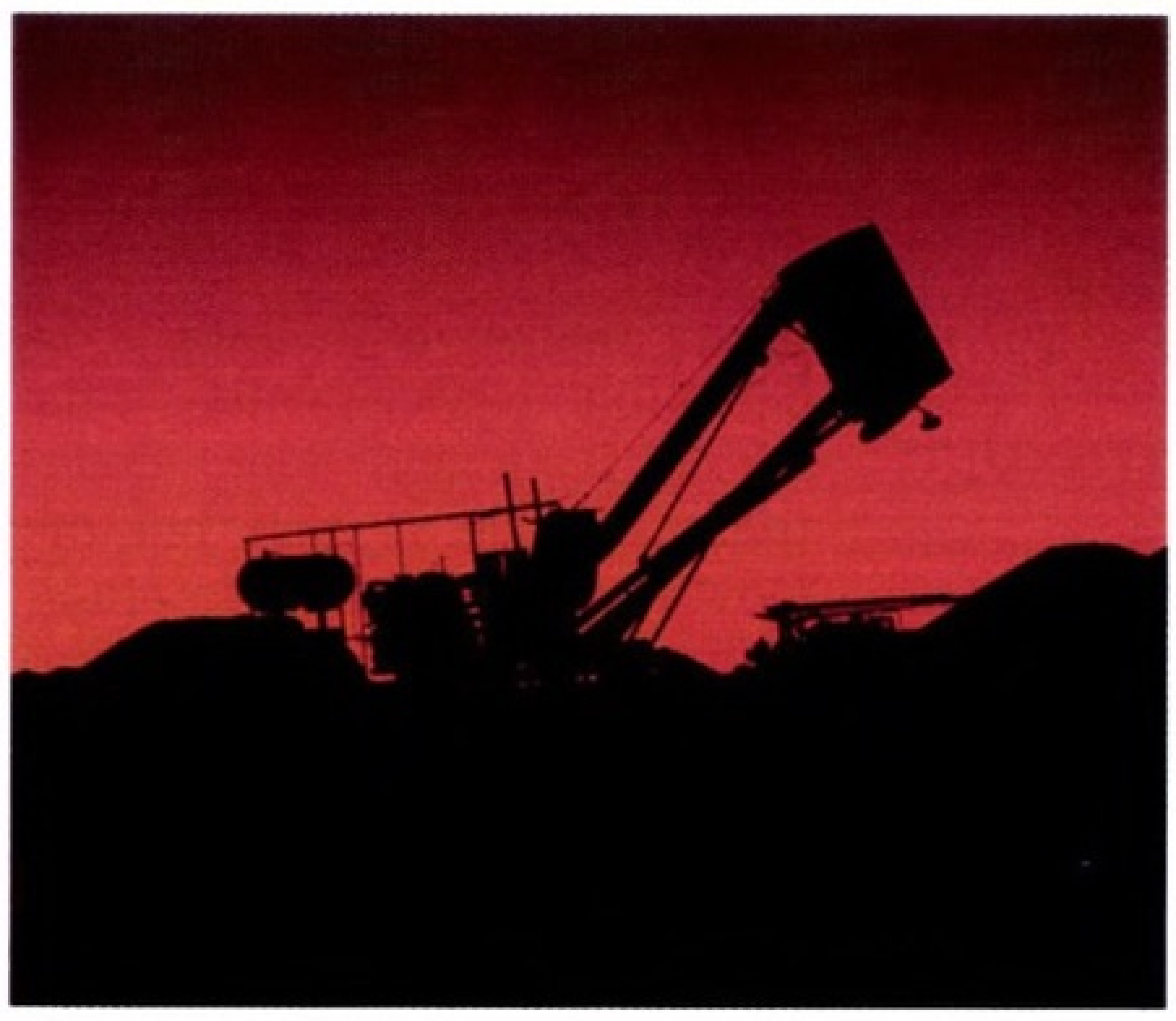

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MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ANDREW KOKOTKA**.
FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY **DAVE RICHARDS/RISC**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Mining

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

'So what's your first issue?'

'Mining,' I reply.

Blank faces, eyes averted, and finally the delayed response, 'Oh'. I discovered that mining is not exactly a word that arouses interest. Definitely not a headline word. A deadly word really. A dirty word, you could say.

It's hard to explain to those blank faces why mining has always astounded and horrified me and how I came to realize that we rely so much on products made from mining that there's no escaping it.

This realization dawns early in life for Australians like me – nearly everyone has relatives and friends working for the mining industry. Each state of this huge country is dotted with mines, digging up every conceivable mineral lying beneath it. Here the gold-rush days are not over. But nowadays people look for silica for computers and the towns left behind after the mines have moved on contain thousands of people.

The industry is continually telling us that without mining there'd be nothing to line supermarket shelves, fill our homes, drive us to work or write letters with. This may be the most accurate claim they've made yet.

Mining companies are good at issuing statements but not at answering questions. Like: 'Why are mining companies allowed to deploy their own armies? Why did Western countries buy piles of metals they'll never actually use? Why is it illegal for women to work in mines?'

Finding writers to answer those questions wasn't an easy task. Some were busy attending conferences, others were getting married, or visiting the Philippines, or throwing up with food poisoning, or writing reports. One had even died. And others were busy pouring all their energy into resisting the orthodoxy that says mining and consumption is progress. In the words of one Aboriginal woman: 'Honey, I want to help you. But Aboriginals don't have time for writing – we're too busy fighting!'

All around the world people are resisting mining that is unwanted or uncontrolled. These people would say to me: 'You are doing an edition on mining? That's excellent! Its effects are so crucial here.' Then I'd hear about how it had become a life-and-death issue for yet another community. And this encouraged me and others at *New Internationalist* to do this magazine. So here it is – Mining.

Anouk Ride

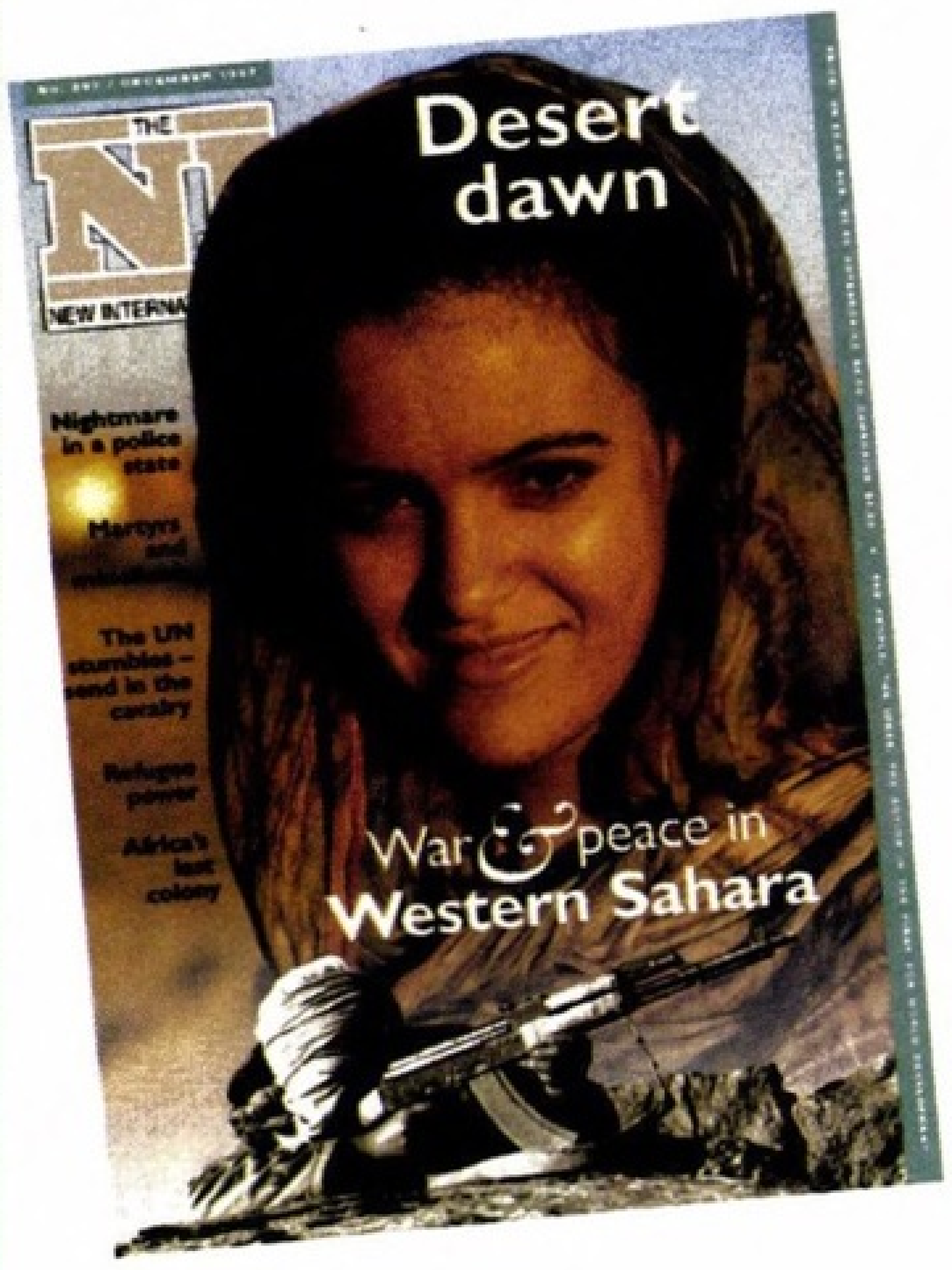
Anouk Ride
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

Glossing good guys

I found your recent issue on Western Sahara (**NI 297**) a real eye-opener, given the lack of media attention to this conflict.

However, I was extremely disappointed to see one passing reference to a population-increase policy and lack of contraceptive availability with zero analysis. This is an issue that would have a huge impact on the lives of the Saharawis, but it is glossed over. How do the women of Western Sahara feel about the lack of contraception in the refugee camps? What are the figures for maternal mortality? Is contraception use punished? Is remaining single and/or childless stigmatized?



And why the omission? The **NI** is usually not slow to take up gender issues. Is it a desire to avoid looking too closely at any shortcomings of the 'good guys'?

Merryn Smith
Ferntree, Australia

Awaiting perfection

The letter from Frédéric Gouin ('Letters' **NI 297**) concerning the Rugmark Label criticizes it for 'creating the illusion that the problem of child labour is solved and that the carpets people are buying are free from child labour'. No organization associated with the Rugmark would assert that it gives a foolproof guarantee of no illegal child labour, but it certainly prevents consistent use of child labour in its looms and its existence has led to a general reduction in child labour in the industry. It is not generally understood that Rugmark exporters have to request labels for each export consignment and so Rugmark has close control over its licensees. This enables it to make good use of inspectors' time.

Although Rugmark labels have been put on more than 700,000 carpets since it began in 1995, the 1.25-per-cent royalty has only been payable since 1996. Two Rugmark schools are now open, plus a rehabilitation centre in Bangladesh and three in Nepal. In the battle against abusive child labour one has to begin somewhere. If we all waited for perfection nothing would happen and bonded children would still be the mainstay of the industry.

David Ould
Anti-Slavery Society, London, England

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Propaganda campaign

Last month a Sri Lankan newspaper published a vitrolic attack on Vanessa Baird and the **NI** for her interview with Father Emmanuel (**NI 294**).

The **NI** should not to be intimidated by the concerted propaganda campaign being waged by the Sri Lankan Government to discredit independent reporting of the war.

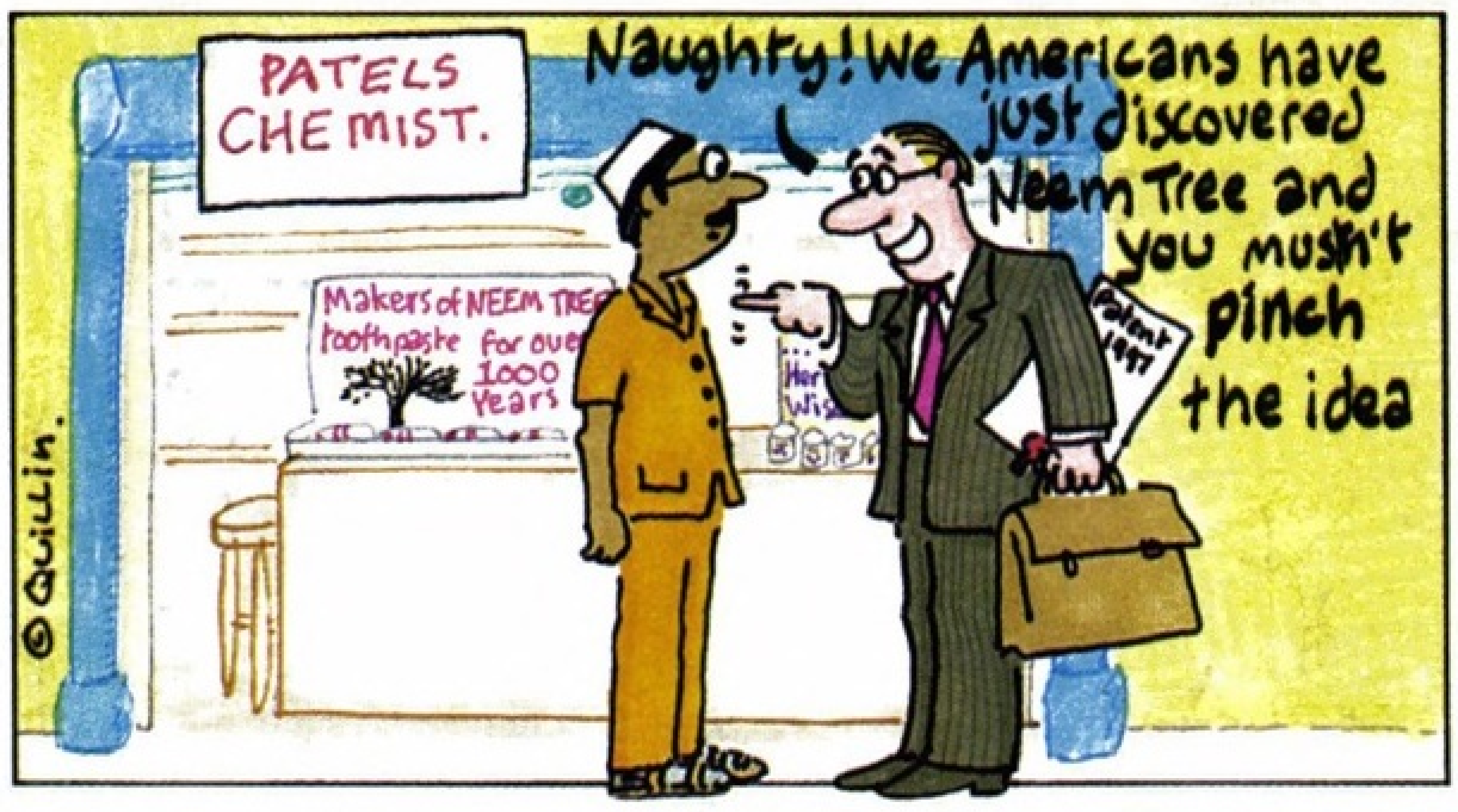
The Government continues to spend vast amounts of money pursuing a final military solution to the 'Tamil problem'. Tamil homes are subjected to routine arbitrary searches by the security forces. Amnesty International's most recent report concluded that the 600-odd people (mostly Tamil) who have 'disappeared' in the past 18 months after their arrest by security forces have nearly all died as a result of torture or been deliberately killed in detention. Meanwhile, the World Bank and donor countries continue to bail out the Government in order to eradicate 'terrorism' and create 'stability'. Large numbers of Tamils have left the country after losing confidence in ever being accepted as equal citizens in their own country.

Name and address witheld

Life science

With respect to your edition on genes (**NI 293**) I think the following issues related to the life-science industries are even more troubling than gene patenting. First, the issue of poor drugs for poor countries – many drugs advertised in WHO publications are substandard. Some adverts in the Indian edition of the British Medical Journal are misleading and would not be permitted in the UK edition. Second, the pressure against price controls: for example, China's plans to restrict the profit on foreign medicines to 12 per cent will now be shelved because of the US pharmaceutical industry's threats to block China's entry into the World Trade Organization. Third, appropriation of traditional intellectual property – WR Grace, a US company, has patented extracts from seeds which have been used as medicines and pesticides in South Asia for millennia. Fourth, there is pressure on countries like India to recognize foreign patents on essential medicines which will mean them becoming too expensive for most Indians. And finally: abusive clinical trials. For example in 15 US studies on HIV transmission carried out in Africa and Asia, many patients were only given placebos, an action defended on the grounds that these women were too poor to afford drugs anyway.

Richard Thornhill
Tokyo, Japan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Respecting readers

I expected your issue on ***Landmines*** (**NI 294**) to raise a lot of interest, debate and even controversy. What took me by surprise was Ilse Debler-Grant's letter published in the November issue (**NI 296**). Like her, I was shocked by the photo published on page 22 alongside the interview with war surgeon Chris Giannou, but this is rather a question of personal sensitivity.

Living in a country where wild competition among TV stations has made it more likely than not that such images be served to families with children at dinner time, I am understandably craving the opportunity to decide for myself what to watch and what to avoid. For this reason I found Dinyar Godrej's warning in the editor's letter appropriate and respectful of readers' individual needs. Instead of a shocked reaction I would like to express my thanks.

Giorgio Berardi
Forlì, Italy

Self-gratification

After reading the eulogistic review of *Songs at the River's Edge: Stories from a Bangladeshi Village* (**NI 293**) I rushed to get a copy, only to be disappointed. The book was more about the author than anything else. Let me give an example. The author makes the mistake – quite common in the West – of assuming that people in traditional and poor societies have more children because they need their income and for security in old age. This is only partially true. In these societies, having children is a social/cultural act endowed with spiritual feeling. Women especially receive reward and acceptance for having children. Even in well-off urban families (who don't need extra working hands) young married couples are always urged to have children soon, and when they do a great deal of love and spiritual rituals are bestowed on the children as well as honour to the couple. For a Westerner on a self-gratification trip such subtleties are hard to perceive.

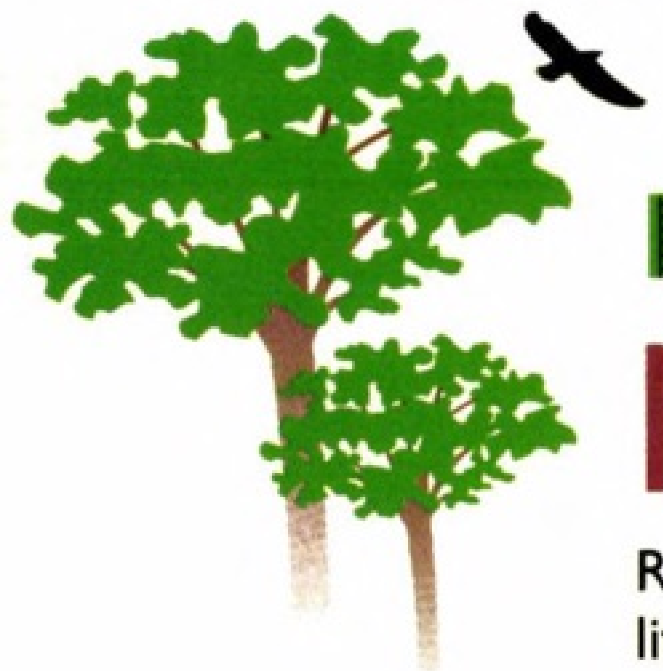
I would recommend instead *A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladeshi Village* by Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce (Zed Press 1993). It also uses anecdotal style but quite effectively portrays rural life and the inequitable social structures that prevent the rural poor from changing their lives.

Iftekhar Ahmed
Oxford, England

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

Awards for NI

The *Utne Reader* (a US alternative magazine) has awarded the **NI** its Ninth Alternative Press Award for International Coverage. We have also been shortlisted for the Business and Consumer Coverage section for the British Environmental and Media Awards.



LETTER FROM COLOMBIA

Natural causes

Ricardo seemed an unlikely environmentalist. **Jenny James** tells of his life – and death.

THERE are no two ways about it: Ricardo was crazy. He was our nearest neighbour and one of our best friends. He was also one of the most successful men around: his tree-felling, opium-poppy-growing lifestyle had enabled him to set up a discotheque in Rovira, the nearest hamlet, where he sold drink and junk foods.

But he was not happy: his even-grumpier wife was leaving him. He started spending a lot of time on our farm. He would weed carrots in silence beside me, or play for hours with our pet monkey or simply sit in our kitchen while food was being prepared.

Once he arrived during birthday celebrations: we were putting on quite an elaborate theatre show for our own entertainment. He watched reverently, though it was in English, and later returned with a message from the local Community Action Group, of which he was a prominent member: please would we perform for the people of Rovira on Mother's Day? I was horrified. We did not consider ourselves professionals and had never done such a thing before. I argued and wriggled. He held his ground. And won.

We put on our three-hour theatre in Rovira on Mothers' Day.

Ricardo was a good community leader. He was neither swayed unduly by the guerrillas, nor by empty Government promises. He grew closer to us, not out of any heartfelt environmental concern, but because he was bored and saw us as a possible source of fresh influence (and maybe affluence). Just before he died, aged 34, he became the lover of Anne, a community member.

For a long time, Ricardo had been moaning at us to buy his farm, which included a huge area of virgin forest. We simply had no money, our environmental campaign had scarcely begun and large sums of money (like $5,000) were not our forte.

But Ricardo knew how strongly we felt about trees and made a clever move. One day, when I was resting with the children on our 'afternoon log', we were jolted out of our reverie by the hideous sound of chainsaw teeth snarling and gnawing nearby. Then the inevitable sickening thud. Then another. And another.

Ricardo was felling the forest that stood between his farm and ours. The children and I held on to one another in tears. Louise, 15 at the time, quietly and savagely muttered: 'I hope a tree falls on him.'

Ricardo's smart move did wonders for our Green Campaign: in pain at the tree felling, I wrote an impassioned plea for help to the green movements of Europe. The miracle happened: an English couple I will probably never meet sent the money and we saved the rest of Ricardo's forest, leaving him the already opened land.

Surprisingly, our friendship with him deepened, though it never cured his grumpiness. He brought me flowering shrubs and tree cuttings to plant. He asked to come along and support us when we had a big meeting with the southern-region guerrilla commander to get permission for some young Irishmen to make a video of the area. And, most amazingly, he showed interest in giving up his disco and turning it into an environmental centre.

I started giving him beautiful maps and posters of Amazonia, which he stuck up on his walls next to pictures of naked women on motorbikes, photos of Rambo and paintings of a self-pitying blonde, blue-eyed Jesus.

One day I left for a rare trip to Bogotá. Soon after, Anne phoned me. She was choked with tears.

'Ricardo is dead,' she sobbed.

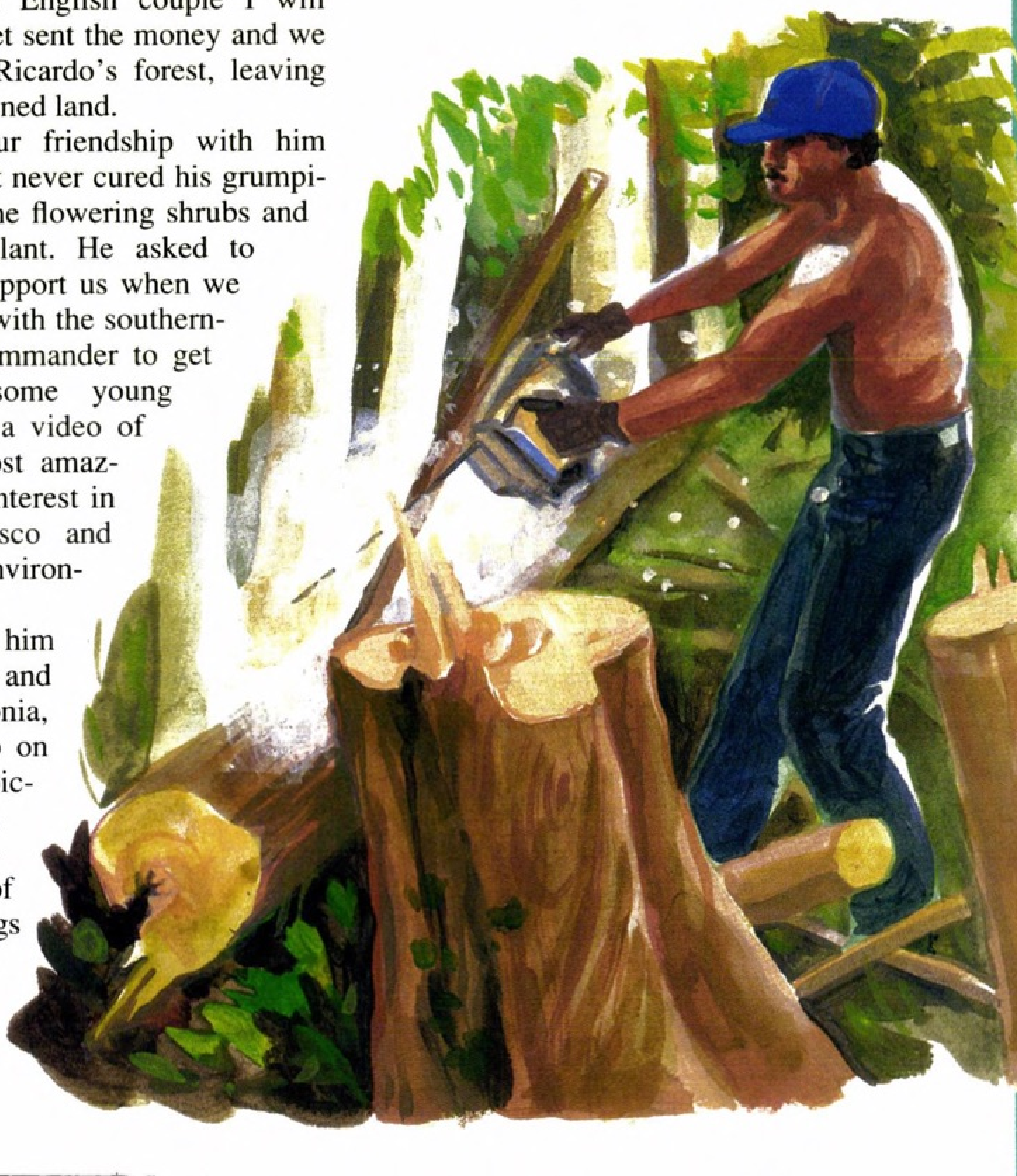
In Colombia, it is so unusual for a man to die young from anything other than violence that they specify 'Murió de muerte natural' – he died from natural causes.

Ricardo had been fainting a lot. Anne insisted he see a doctor, who found nothing wrong. A few days later, Ricardo dropped dead from a massive brain haemorrhage whilst digging out a huge pit to make a fish-farm next door to us.

Some months later, I was discussing the dangers of tree-felling with a neighbour after one of our lads had an accident.

'Yes,' said the neighbour, 'that's what happened to Ricardo – his fainting fits began after a branch fell on him when he was cutting the forest next to you.' ■

Jenny James has lived and worked in the Colombian rainforest since 1987.



SARAH JOHN

Update

TRADE

Outlawed!

Multinational agreement will make sovereign rights illegal

PEPSI
THE CHOICE OF A NEW GENRATION

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

No limits to investment – the MAI leaves India with little choice.

A CAMPAIGNING coalition is stepping up its fight against a proposed international accord which, it says, would undermine developing countries' sovereignty and leave them open to exploitation by foreign investors.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) (see 'Keynote' **NI 298**) is likely to be tentatively approved in April by the 29 member nations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It forbids signatory governments from placing restrictions on foreign investment in any sector other than defence, and from giving preference to domestic companies over foreign investors. Local authorities would also be barred from laying down investment conditions, such as labour quotas or environmental standards. Anything deemed discriminatory by an investor could result in a government being taken before an OECD arbitration panel, which could order it to back down or face punishment. In other words, the MAI would allow corporations to sue cities, states and national governments.

'Clearly this is one liberalization too far,' says Barry Coates, director of the London-based World Development Movement (WDM) – one of a 40-strong alliance of non-governmental organizations from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America opposing the accord. Coates points out that many countries have used the type of policies that the MAI would outlaw to develop their national industries.

South Korea, for example, jealously protected its car industry as it pursued heavy industrialization. When India allowed Pepsi Cola to invest in the Punjab in the early 1990s it imposed conditions that would benefit the local economy. These included guarantees of 50,000 new jobs and the construction of food-processing plants. Under the MAI, conditions such as these would be illegal.

'There has never been a country that has developed itself under the conditions proposed by the MAI,' observes Coates. 'It restricts underdeveloped countries to a low-wage, commodity future, with no hope of diversifying their economies.'

The coalition criticizes the MAI for excluding developing countries from the negotiating table, and for undermining moves stemming from the 1992 Earth Summit to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development. Although the coalition opposing the accord has little chance of sinking it, campaigners are hoping to wring concessions before the final agreement is reached – particularly regarding local protection for labour and the environment. ■

Alan Martin/*Gemini News Service*

Money comes from trees

Money talks in the trees around the village of Ikodi in the Niger delta. The feathers of the African Grey Parrot are collected and sold. This has become a key economic resource for Ikodi villagers and one which is zealously guarded. Local laws forbid the trapping of parrots, the felling of palm trees and the use of firearms that might frighten the birds. Poachers face a beating if caught. Still, poaching remains a problem. The birds are highly prized by smugglers due to their ability to speak and whistle like a human. Ikodi is one of the few places where the birds are still numerous. Elsewhere numbers have dwindled due to poaching and tree-felling.

Sam Olukoya/*Gemini News Service*

Low-level radiation controls canned

Due to the relaxation of standards by the European Union's nuclear agency (Eurotom), radioactive waste could end up in a range of household goods, including food cans. The directive, due to come into force by May 2000 will allow recycled radioactive materials that expose people to less than ten microsieverts of radiation a year to be sold without seeking Eurotom permission. Richard Bramhall from the Welsh Low Level Radiation Campaign states that the nuclear industry plans to treat radioactively contaminated materials for use in food cans. 'They have been waiting open-mouthed for these exemptions,' he said. But John Cooper, from the British National Radiological Protection Board said the regulations will only apply when 'the risks are trivial and not worth regulating'.

New Scientist No 2096

Racism threatens German trade

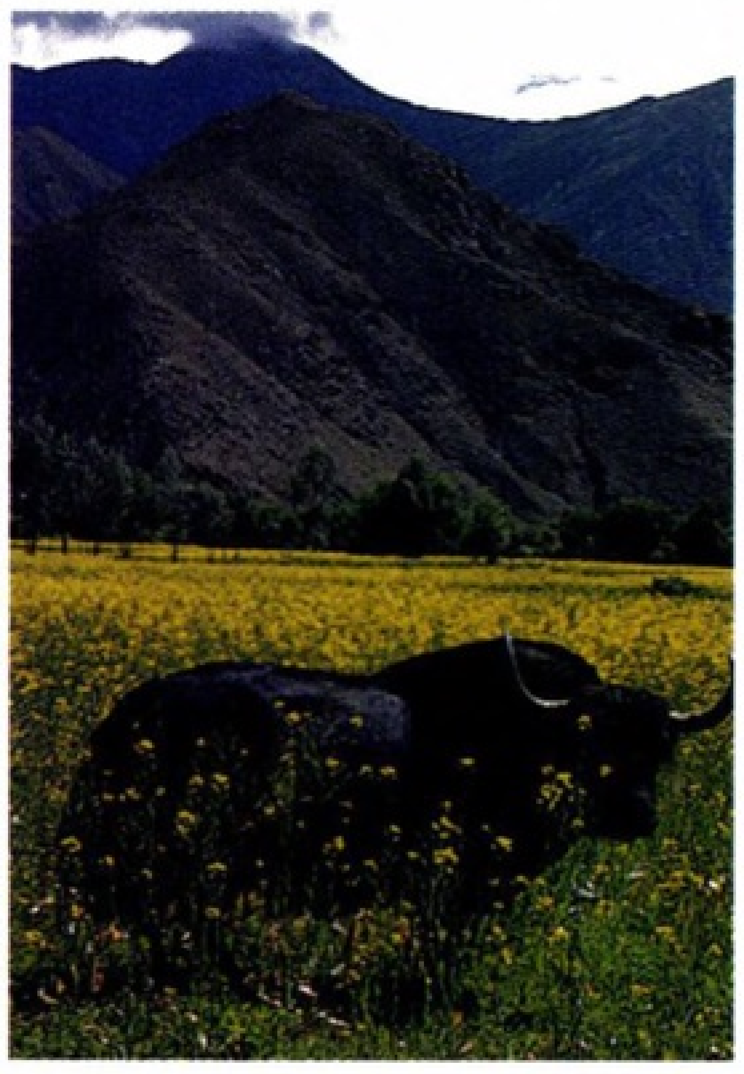
Germany's current reputation for racist attacks, xenophobia and unwelcoming bureaucrats has lead to a sharp decline in the number of foreign students – potentially damaging the national economy. Business leaders have realized with alarm that a fall in the number of foreigners, particularly Asians, enrolled in German universities and other institutions of learning could translate into lost trading opportunities. Asian students are seen as particularly valuable because they come from countries which, whatever their current economic problems, are thought to have great potential for growth. German industry is now anxious to reverse the decline and has urged the Government to take action.

MIKE SCHRODER / PANOS PICTURES

– Manik Mehta/*Gemini News Service*

Yak tax

Tensions between China and Tibet have escalated over alleged yak exploitation. Since 1959 the Chinese Government has been taking millions of yaks in taxes from Tibetans. Although a yak currently fetches over 1,000 Chinese yuan ($120), as tax they are only valued at 50 yuan ($6). Recently, China has flooded Western markets with low-cost, allegedly yak-leather shoes. China is reported to have labelled the leather as coming from a fictitious animal species from a remote region of China. Tibetan locals say that the increased slaughter of the animals is threatening the survival of the Tibetan yak population.



BEN ARIS / PANOS PICTURES

Tibetan Bulletin Vol 1 Issue 3

AFRICA

Herding and homework

High illiteracy causes problems for child cowherds

For a developing country, Lesotho has an unusual literacy problem – boys are less likely to read and write than girls. Normally, it would be the boys who had priority when it came to schooling. Parents tend to invest in sons rather than daughters who may marry and live elsewhere.

But here, most boys between the ages of seven and fifteen spend their time herding livestock. An old African proverb calls the cow a 'god with a wet nose' because it is vital to people's survival in this small, mountainous southern-African kingdom. Herd boys, often from poor backgrounds, are compelled to work to assist their families. They are usually employed by wealthier people who have large herds to graze. A great deal of responsibility rests on their shoulders and their work is hard and dangerous. Severe weather, thieves and wild animals threaten their safety. The young herders leave home for weeks or months on end to tend their flocks.

Sengoara Nthonyana, 15, single-handedly looks after 700 sheep and 72 cattle, earning only 700 *maloti* ($140) or one cow a year – 'that is if I stay on duty until the end of the last month of the year,' he points out. 'If the boss decides to fire me before that, then it's hard luck.' He adds that 'if a boy slackens in his watch he may wake up to find that two or more of his animals have been killed in the night.' This means deductions from his pay, 'or even worse – deduction and dismissal'.

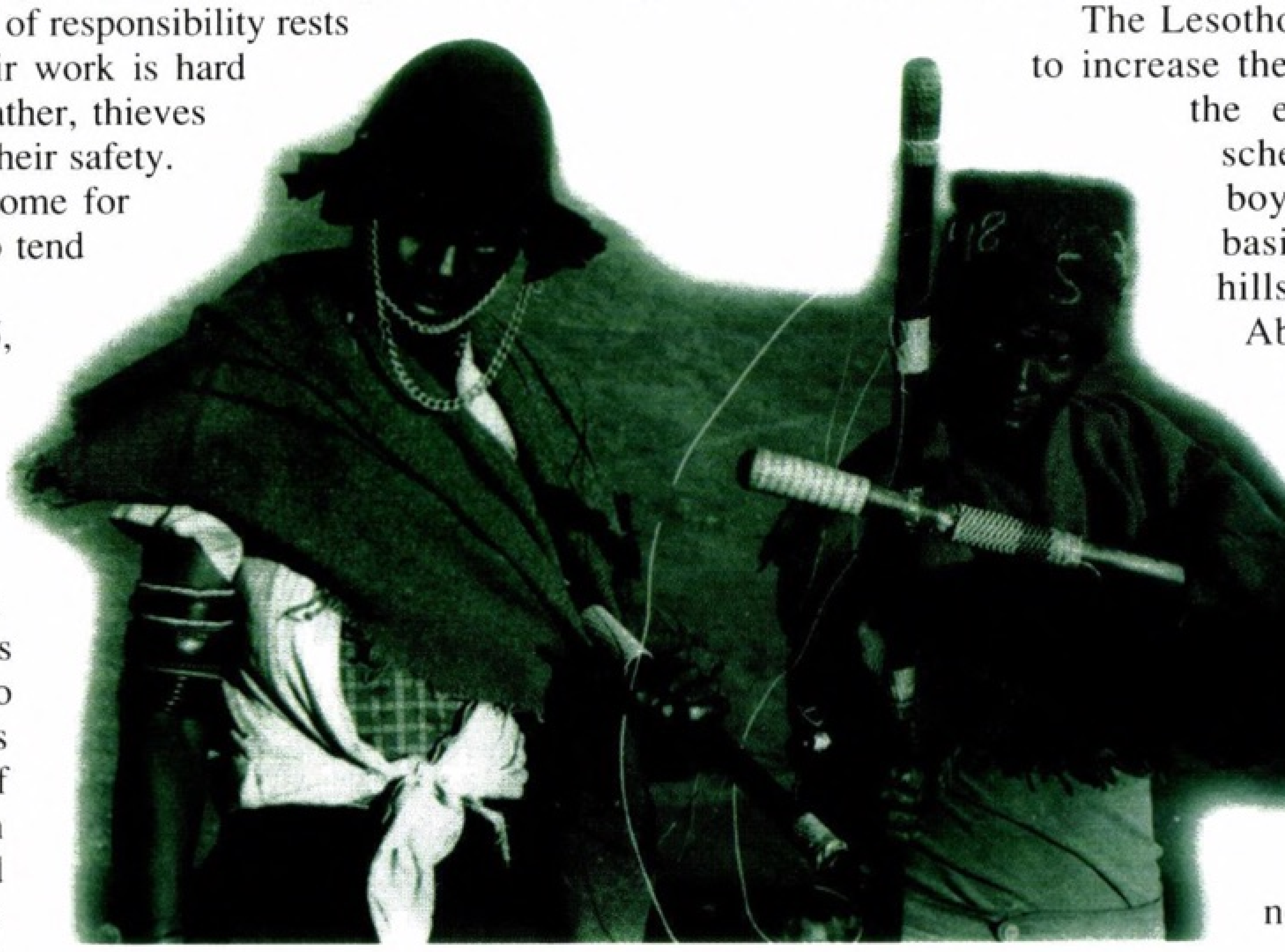
Loneliness and poor wages are not the only challenges. In 1996, when strong winds and heavy snowfall battered the highlands, seven boys perished after being stranded with their animals. They died of cold and hunger, isolated from families and friends. More than 75 others suffered seriously from exposure.

There are other problems too. When they grow older and finish herding, many former herders face difficulty finding work because they have few skills to fall back on in a country of high unemployment. The illiteracy rate for males over 15 is as high as 60 per cent in some areas compared with 11 per cent for females.

The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre aims to increase the literacy rate by 20 per cent by the end of the decade. It runs a scheme which encourages young boys with a little education to take basic teaching materials into the hills to share with their friends. About 700 boys graduated from the program last year.

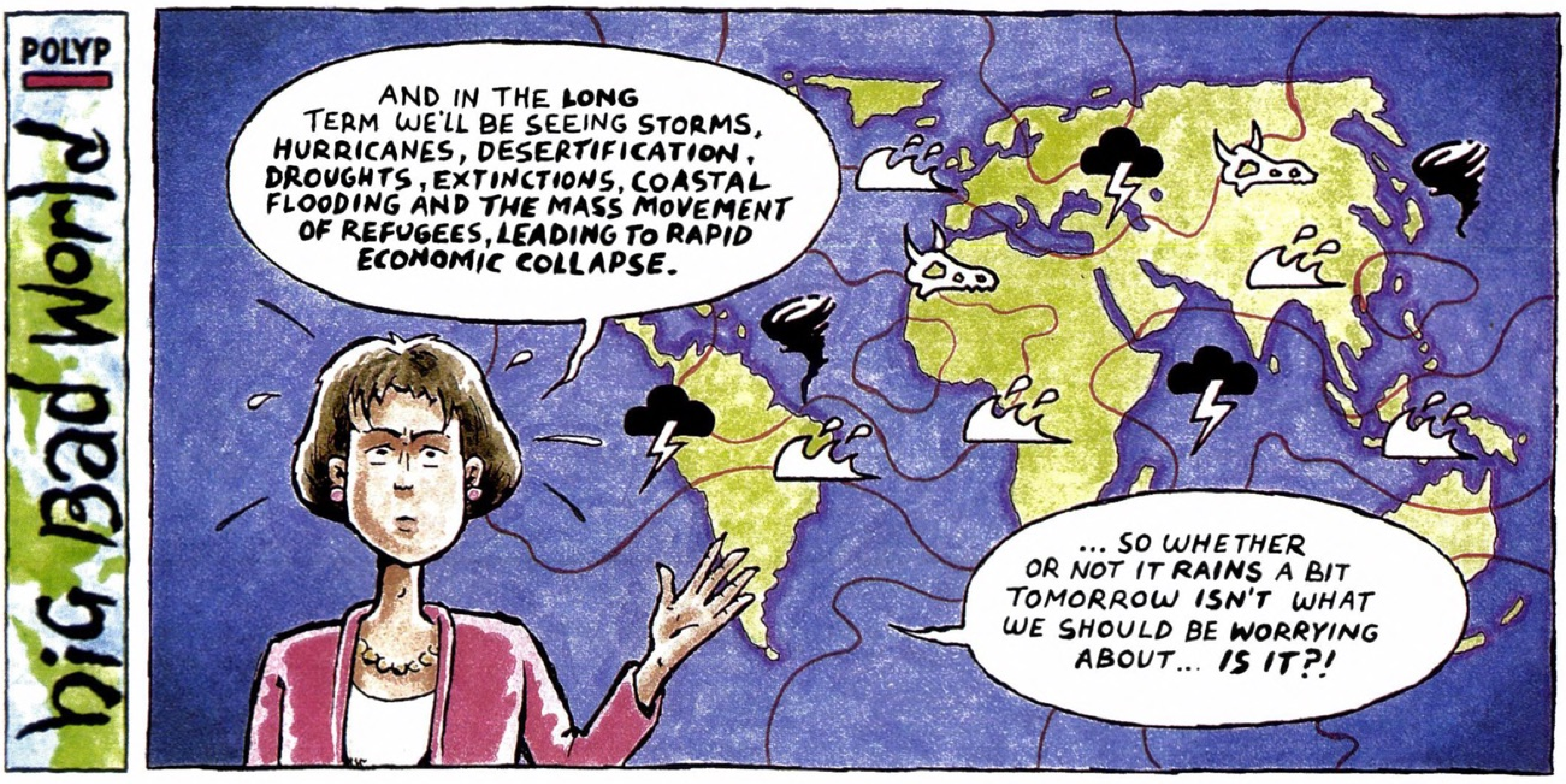
Change is essential as former herders can no longer rely on jobs in neighbouring South Africa, which has been cutting back on the use of foreign labour. More boys will need to be able to read and write if they are to survive in the new Lesotho. ■

Tsitso Rampuku/
Gemini News Service



CANDI RAMAINOANE

Looking to learn, needing to work: young herders in Lesotho.


POLYP
big Bad World
AND IN THE LONG TERM WE'LL BE SEEING STORMS, HURRICANES, DESERTIFICATION, DROUGHTS, EXTINCTIONS, COASTAL FLOODING AND THE MASS MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES, LEADING TO RAPID ECONOMIC COLLAPSE.
...SO WHETHER OR NOT IT RAINS A BIT TOMORROW ISN'T WHAT WE SHOULD BE WORRYING ABOUT... IS IT?!

Update

SOUTH PACIFIC

Kava craze

Transnational corporations to monopolize ceremonial plant

GUY MANSFIELD / PANOS PICTURES

From a trickle to a flood: patents threaten small farmers.

A CEREMONIAL plant used in the South Pacific has become the target of multiple patents (see **NI 293** on genes). Over 100 varieties of kava are grown by many South Pacific nations as a cash crop as an ingredient in an important ceremonial drink. But now corporations from the US, Europe and Japan are filing patents for the exclusive use of the plant for commercial purposes, and for methods of processing and preparing it.

French company L'Oreal, for example, has patented the use of kava to reduce hair loss and stimulate hair growth. Owned by Nestlé, one of the world's biggest food and drink companies, and France's richest woman, Liliane Bettencourt, L'Oreal has obtained or is seeking patents in the US, Canada, Japan, China, Germany, France, Italy, Britain, Spain, Hungary and Poland. In North America and Europe, kava is being aggressively promoted for a variety of uses – including its anti-stress and tranquillizing effects.

In Europe alone, extracts are being sold by at least 14 drug companies. The German company Willmar Schwabe has patented its use in treating strokes, insomnia and Alzheimer's disease. Another German company, Krewel-Werke has patented its system for extracting medicinal compounds from kava for oral use.

These patents for the use, processing and preparation of the plant are raising concern in the South Pacific. Small farmers fear that large companies are taking control of the kava market, and that the import of cheap foreign plants may eventually threaten local sales. Farmers also fear that larger-scale plantations will take over their small allotments and that they will become cheap labour for companies making Western kava-based pharmaceuticals.

Industrial interest in farming the plant is considerable. Australians have sought kava germplasm from Samoa to plant 10,000 hectares in Australia. Plans for kava plantations have also cropped up in Hawaii and Mexico. This has strengthened calls for the regulation of access to such natural resources in the South Pacific. ■

***Rural Advancement Foundation International* (RAFI) *Communiqué*, September/October 1997**

A debt-free millennium

A growing international campaign to cancel the debts of the world's poorest nations is gathering steam. Jubilee 2000 is creating a petition to be presented to the 1999 G-8 conference in Germany. It is also asking for people to send letters to politicians and to the IMF urging their support for debt relief.

'Jubilee 2000 is a time to say, "My God, what have we been doing?"' says John Patrick, a Catholic priest in Nigeria . 'Can we look on the debt as a purely financial affair when millions of people are dying for want of medicine, children not going to school, people dying of hunger, simply because they have to pay their debts?' Organizations from 40 countries are currently involved in the campaign. For more information contact Jubilee 2000, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT, Tel: +44 171 401 9999, e-mail: j2000c@gn.ap.org

Murray MacAdam/*Jubilee* 2000

Chewing rubber

A chemist from the University of Northern Iowa has discovered how to make lemon oil from discarded tyres. Kirk Manfredi produces limonene, which is the main ingredient of many citrus oils, from tyre rubber. Although the oil is from an artificial source, its chemical structure matches the oil obtained from lemons. Manfredi's extraction technique produces about two per cent of the tyre's weight in limonene. Manfredi hopes to improve the process so that nearly ten per cent of the tyre can be converted into purified lemon oil. He says in the future lemon oil from tyres may be used to scent soaps and cleaners and to flavour soft drinks. He hopes to isolate other useful compounds in tyres that could be used in chewing gum, mouthwash and insect-repellent candles.

RON GILING / PANOS PICTURES

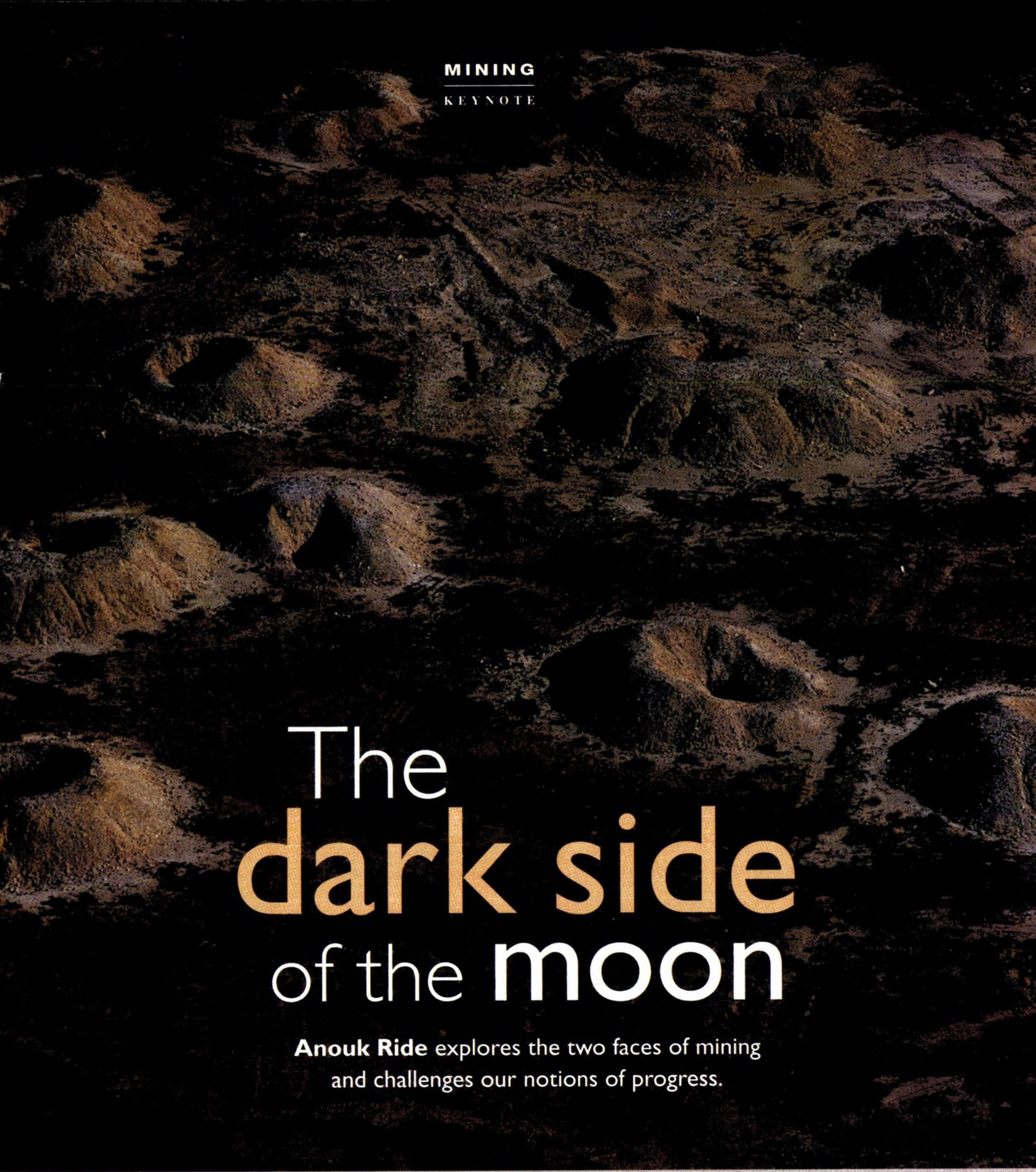
Tyre extract – A new soft drink flavouring?

Down to Earth Vol 6 No 9

Quote

'People don't steal. They just borrow. And then we borrow back.'

Patrick Tairua of Tupuna Jeep Safari, offering insight into why French Polynesia's island of Bora Bora has only eight municipal police and a low crime rate.



P GINTER / NETWORK

The dark side of the moon

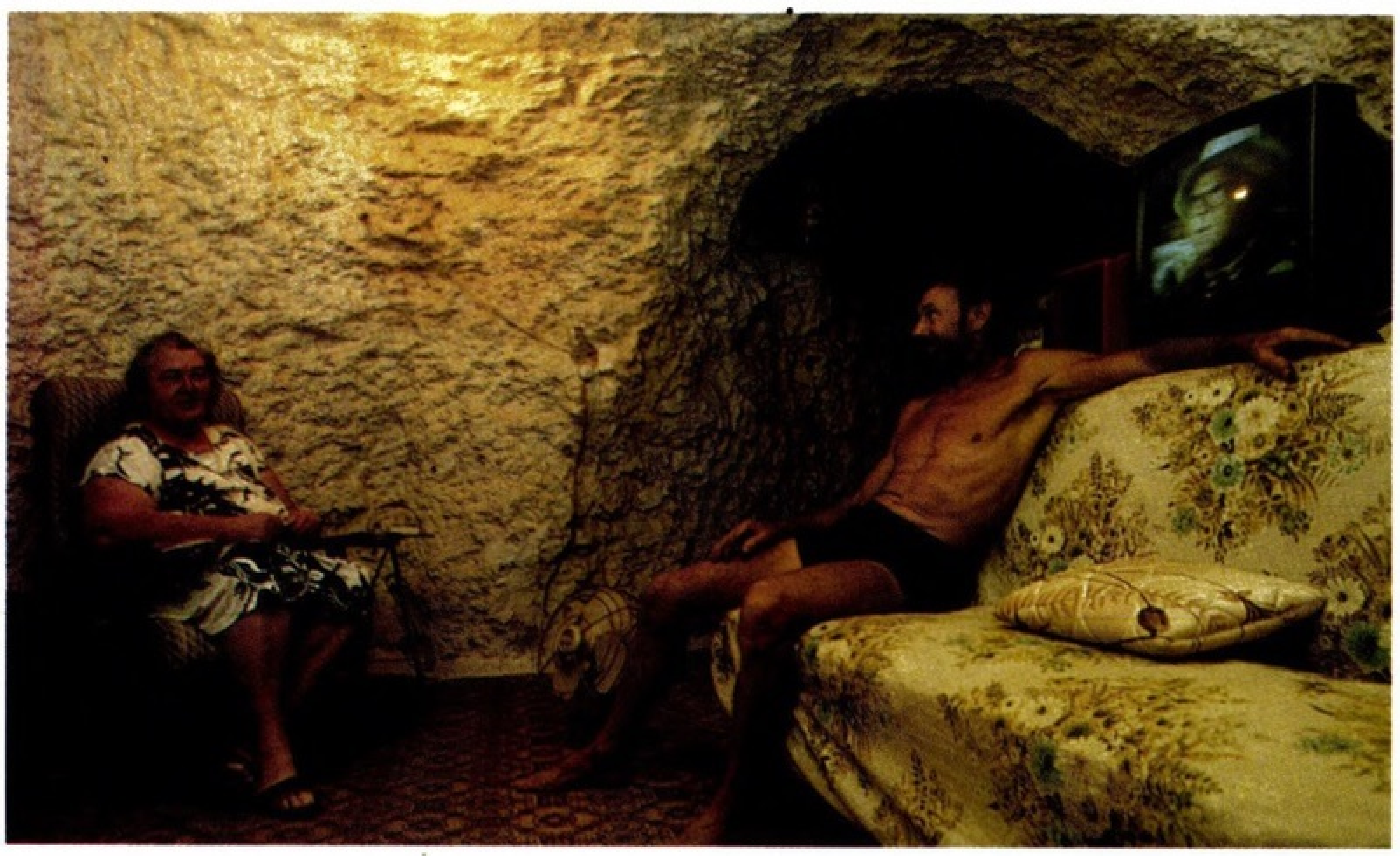
Anouk Ride explores the two faces of mining and challenges our notions of progress.

I HAVE landed on the moon. Its pale surface is littered with tiny pieces of shiny rock illuminated by the heat of the distant sun. It is a colourless face, scarred with mounds topped with dark pockmarks and craters indenting the folds of its skin.

Looking for signs of life, I approach a crater and peer into a black hole. Inside is a cave; a room with a sofa, a television and an old carpet lining the floor. The walls are painted white, although inklings of red and brown dirt can be seen through the paint. No-one is home.

They are all working. Each day they climb unstable and worn ladders down the pockmarks, often little wider than their own bodies, in search of the galaxy of colour glistening from the walls of their tunnels. This is their daylight; their hope of a brighter, richer universe.

Opals – that is all that seems to sustain people in the mining town of Andamooka, South Australia. Water is trucked in from elsewhere. The only green I see is the sign in the window of the store: American Express Accepted Here. Sure enough, inside a few elderly Americans and some Japanese tourists make exclamations over jewellery glistening with the luminous



D SCHMID / NETWORK

Scarring the face of our planet: Australian opal mining (previous page).
The modern Flintstones – Andamooka, South Australia (left).

gems – tiny flecks of which line the street outside.

Finally, at dusk, the miners scramble up to the outside world. Their eyes, still adjusting to the lights, seem wide and manic. My mother whispers in my ear: 'They're as mad as snakes.'

The following day we visit the Olympic Dam mine and nearby town of Roxby Downs. We are told that Olympic Dam is mainly a copper mine with small amounts of gold, silver and uranium produced as well. There is a lengthy explanation of 'water management systems' – how the company minimizes water-use in the desert, encourages the residents of Roxby to plant native trees and recycles waste water. It all seems so sane in comparison to Andamooka. I am bored to death.

I would have paid more attention if I had seen the mine's waste – the world's largest radioactive dump spreading 330 million tons of muck across 720 hectares. Or if I had known that radiation released from the mine as radon gas reaches my home in Adelaide 600 kilometres away before losing its radioactivity. Or if I had been told that expansion plans would mean a tripling of copper and uranium production and the use of four times the current amount of water, drawn from Australia's Great Artesian Basin. This underwater lake covers an area of over 1.7 million square kilometres, sustaining vegetation, animals and Aboriginal culture in one of the most arid regions of the world.[1]

Mining gobbles a tenth of the energy used worldwide every year and churns out enough waste to dwarf the planet's total accumulation of garbage

Andamooka and Olympic Dam are clear-cut examples of mining madness. We do not need opals or uranium. But what about construction materials for our homes, metals for telephones and energy to light up dark streets? Life on earth without mining is as inconceivable as life on the moon.

Since the beginning of time mining has changed the face of humankind. The ancient Roman and Greek writers depicted mining as an abuse of mother earth. But the use of minerals has also been linked to notions of 'progress'. From the Stone and Iron Ages to the current age of technology, consumption of the products of mining has been seen as a sign of development. From 1750 to 1900 the world's overall use of minerals increased tenfold while its population doubled. Economic progress has seen this leap at least thirteen-fold again this century.[2]

Colonialism was fuelled by the same quest for 'progress', as industrialized nations invaded the South and squabbled over its natural resources. Companies spread economic dependence while their governments asserted political dominance – France's long stay in Kanaky (New Caledonia) had more to do with its love of nickel than of palm trees.

It is ironic that the countries which experienced colonialism at first hand are now spreading a new contagion. Australian companies first explored and exploited Papua New Guinea (PNG). From here their sphere of influence widened to cover much of Asia and the Pacific. Canadians travelled down to South America to establish mines and are still one of the biggest miners there. Together, Canada and Australia are now responsible for most of the mining in the world.

Mining is happening on the largest scale in history. Since 1990 half the world's states have opened their doors to international companies and are actively encouraging them to invest – more than 70 have changed their mining laws. For example, Brazil's sale of the most massive iron-ore operations in the world is the latest in a string of privatizations.

In their panic to unearth more lucre, companies are always on the move. In their wake they leave environmental degradation, dependency on primary exports and foreign capital, human-rights abuses and displaced indigenous people.

The attitude of British mining-giant Rio Tinto (RTZ-CRA) to indigenous cultures has been no more enlightened than the Victorian view of them as 'savages'. On the island of Bougainville, formally a part of the state of PNG but an area which has long asserted its cultural individuality and desire for political independence, the biggest copper mine in the world was established in 1972. It literally capped a mountain and then bored a deep hole into its summit.

Rio Tinto's Australian offshoot, Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia (CRA), made a fortune but the people of Bougainville were left with less than one per cent of the profits. They considered themselves far poorer than before mining began. As a Bougainvillean mother explained: 'If there was no land, there was no water, there was no bush, what have you? There is no life.'[3]

Companies and governments push aside indigenous people in their mad dash for minerals. In the case of the US-owned Freeport company's (officially known as Freeport-McMoRan) operations in West Papua, even the dead have been unceremoniously dug up and carried away to make room for the mine. In one of the worst cases of corporate complicity, Freeport has provided housing, food and transportation to the Indonesian military which has killed 2,000 people and displaced hundreds of traditional landowners since mining started in 1972. There are now more troops stationed here than in any other Indonesian territory – including East Timor. In other troublespots where national armies have proved reluctant or incapable of such suppression, mining companies have no compunction about using their own (see Roger Moody's 'Diamond Dogs of War' on page 15 of this issue).

The environmental stress caused by mining contorts the face of the earth. The industry gobbles a tenth of the energy used worldwide every year and churns out enough waste to dwarf the planet's total accumulation of municipal garbage.

Mining projects now threaten four out of every ten national parks in equatorial countries. Each year 50,000 hectares of tropical forest are cut to keep the Carajás iron-ore project in Brazil running. And the mining and smelting of metals accounts for the second-largest source of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Government leaders, desperate for investment and royalties, have a glint in their eye when talking about mining. Especially when it comes to their own companies – in the US the mining industry is allowed to buy public land for $12 per hectare or less. It pays no royalties.[2] And the Australian Government's reluctance to agree to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions is unsurprising – the Mount Isa

Six steps
to quit international minerals abuse

❶ **eliminate** unnecessary and undesirable uses of minerals such as high-technology weapons and gold stocks for international exchange.

❷ **substitute** common minerals for rare ones.

❸ **be efficient** in the mining, refining and use of minerals.

❹ **limit consumption** which can only be done through the First World actually reducing its level of per-capita consumption while the Third World raises its levels somewhat using strategies of elimination, substitution and efficiency with the support of the rich countries.

❺ **recycle first**, mine second. Fuel requirements for refining even low-grade scrap metal are considerably less than mining and refining high-grade mineral ores.

❻ **control mining** using internationally agreed standards to ensure minimal environmental impact and human exploitation.

Source: *Future Mineral Products for a Sustainable Society*, unpublished paper by Chris Sharples.

Mines smelter currently produces half as much sulphur dioxide as the whole of Japan. In Indonesia, President Suharto receives around $400 million a year from the US-owned Freeport mine (US diplomat Henry Kissinger is on the company's board). In 1996, Freeport paid an estimated $730, 000 in campaign donations to members of Congress and to President Clinton.

Little has been learned by these companies. In the rich world, the environmental standards and attention to the social effects of mining operations have improved marginally. However, in the words of one environmentalist: 'The industry still feels it has to have "better PR" rather than "How can we do it better?"'[4]

Not all companies are accomplished in the art of public relations. Broken Hill Propriety Ltd (BHP) in PNG is a case in point. Their Ok Tedi mine was started before the country's independence. But following this the company dumped toxic metals and chemicals, known as tailings, into the Fly river. This killed off life for 150 kilometres downstream. The company's Environmental Manager remained unperturbed: 'I don't have a problem with saying we are causing in some areas significant devastation to the environment.' Traditional landowners did. They successfully sued for $400 million and a commitment to rehabilitation where possible.

Even at the height of the controversy over BHP's operations at Ok Tedi, the company was voted 'most admired' by corporate Australia in a magazine poll. And shortly after it wrote legislation for the PNG bureaucrats, it helped the Dominican Government to write a code that repealed constitutionally guaranteed indigenous land and assigned mineral rights to the state.

Despite this appalling record, even BHP may not be the slowest learner amongst its peers – a study of mining and petroleum agreements conducted by the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) found that the only document which contained more than one clause on the environment was – the Ok Tedi agreement.

The limited scrutiny of transnational corporations undertaken by the UNCTC, before it was closed down in 1992, has not been assumed by any other international organization. Instead, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) now helps poor countries encourage large-scale foreign investment. International banks have always rallied to support the corporate cause. The World Bank's proposed draft of mining guidelines sets standards significantly lower than those already enacted in developed countries. A third of people in one area of Bangladesh suffered visible skin lesions after exposure to arsenic at levels *below* the draft's limits.[5]

Mining is not seen as an 'international crisis' because there is still a plentiful supply of minerals. But this is beside the point. Only a small proportion of the remaining minerals are in an easily obtainable form – the great bulk of them are in low concentrations spread over a large area. This means as mining continues it will take more energy, water, poisonous chemicals and pollution to dig up the same amount of ore. The environmental effects of mining are bound to get worse rather than better. Something needs to be done *before* we are mined out of matter.

The top eight industrial nations account for two-thirds of the world's consumption of aluminium, copper and lead – at this rate they may find themselves living it up on the face of the moon. The only way humans can have any quality of life in the future is to discard the idea that mining is 'progress' and to quit the habit of overconsumption. This means an end to exploitation of the Majority World.

It's time to start thinking creatively about how we can use minerals without abusing the earth and its people in the process (see box). We need to take action now if we are to give the pores of the earth some time and space to heal. The doctrine of progress enables us to forget what we all have in common. These are the features we have known since the beginning of time: the scarred, but still smiling, face of the earth. ■

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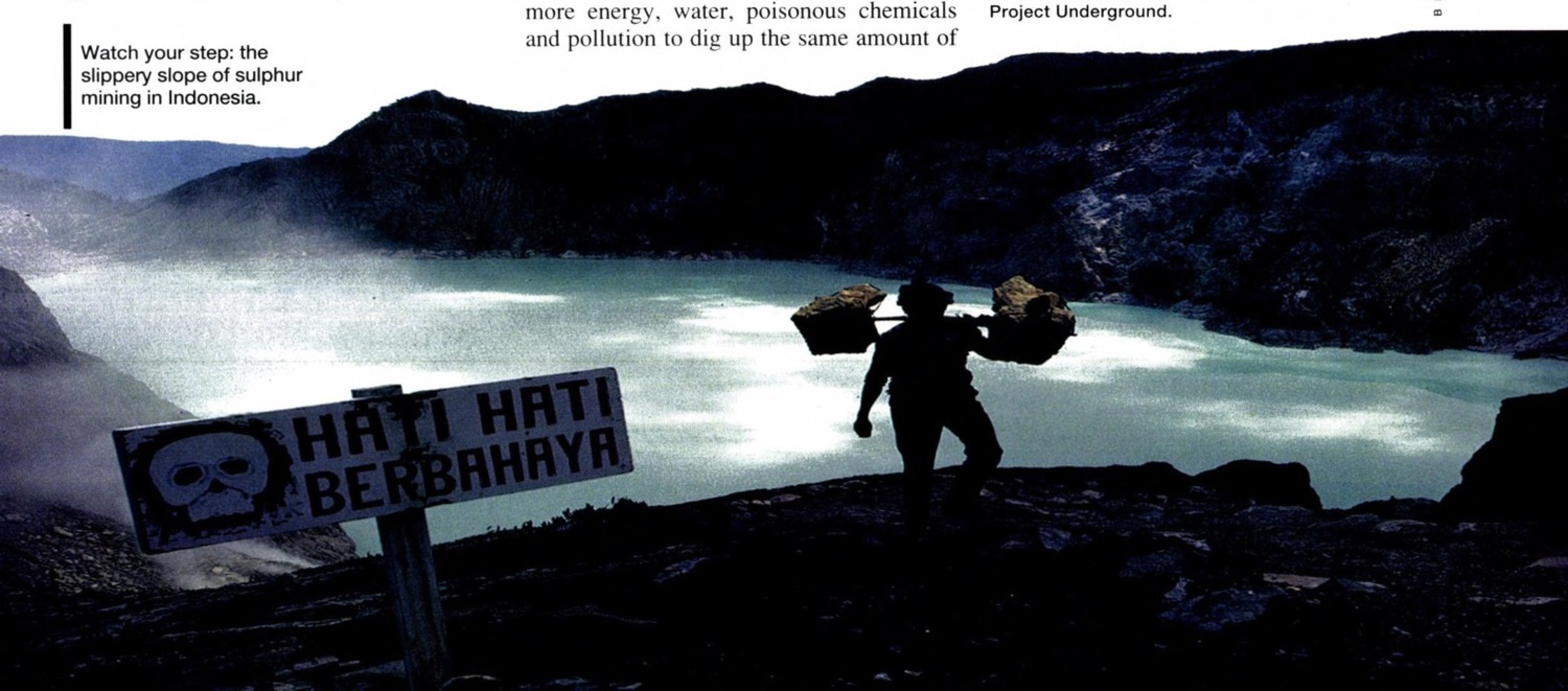
1 *Indigenus Pilipinas Newsletter*, November 1997. **2** John Young, *Mining the Earth*, Worldwatch, 1992. **3** Atu Emberson-Bain, *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?*, Marama Publications, 1994. **4** Peter Hancock, *Green and Gold*, Australian National University, 1993. **5** Information from Project Underground.

Watch your step: the slippery slope of sulphur mining in Indonesia.



B BARBEY / MAGNUM

CRAZY PR

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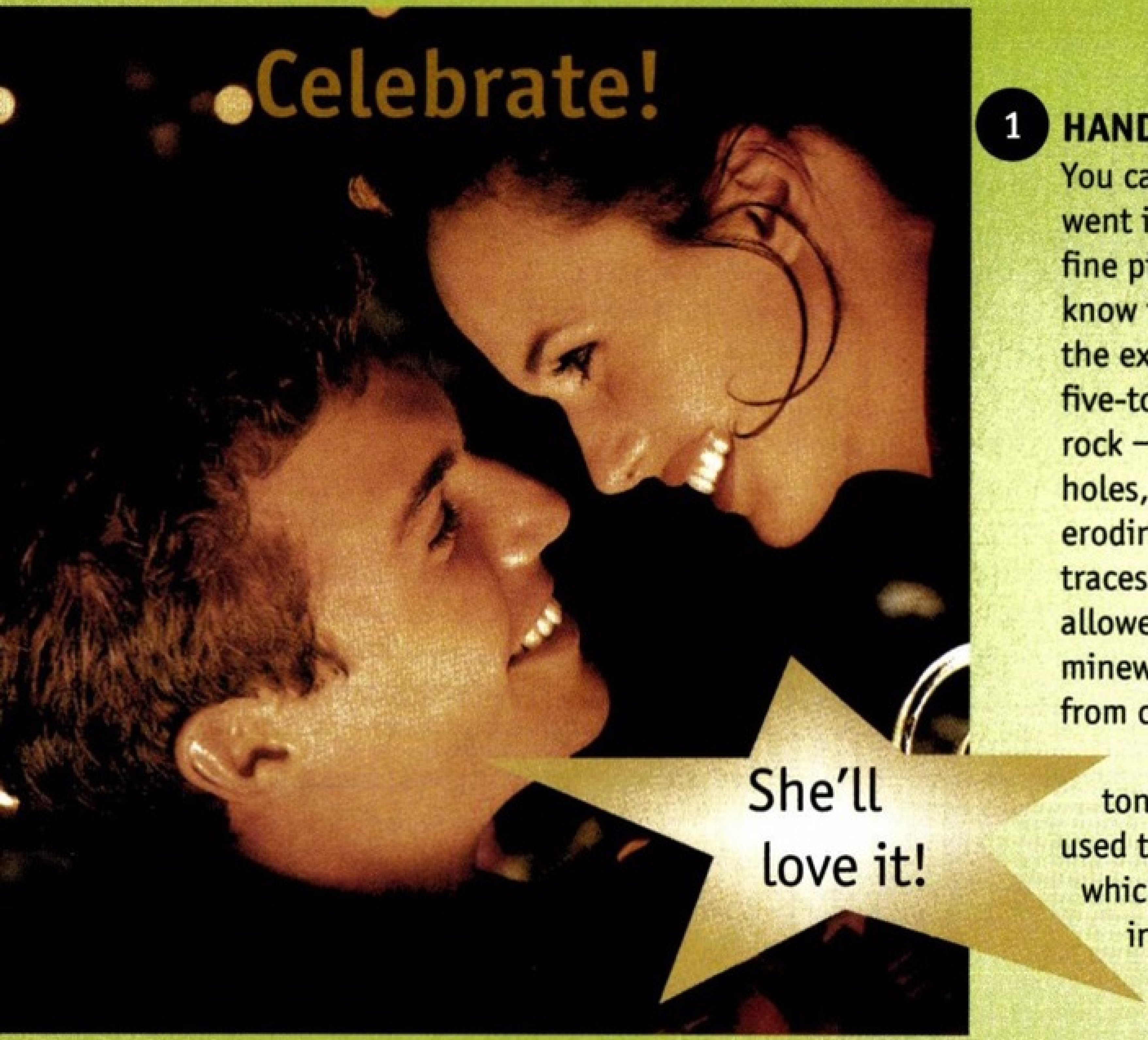
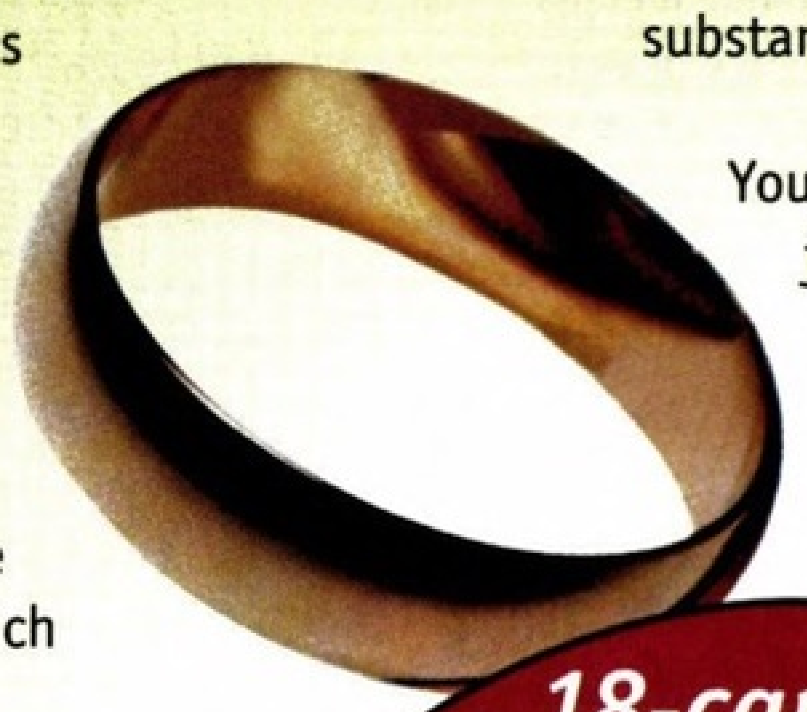

Celebrate!
She'll love it!



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You know this beautiful piece of jewellery says that you are prepared to move heaven and earth for that special someone – acid mine drainage which occurs in old minesites is a permanent reminder of your devotion. For centuries, sulphuric acid will be produced which dissolves heavy metals in the rock and washes them into local water systems. Like your ardour, these changes will stand the test of time.

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But that's not all – *you will not pay any extra* for the vast amounts of energy spent as the iron ore is mined, crushed, ground, separated with magnets and shipped to a furnace. Thanks to authorized furnace pollution, we have secured stocks of this high-quality merchandise and are *giving them away*.

Setting with style

Discount Prices

built to last

Order now!

For next to nothing our manufacturers made coke, used to melt iron and make steel, emitting toxic liquid waste and filling the air with clouds of zinc, lead, iron oxide dust and carbon monoxide. Making this sturdy set of steel cutlery used 260 litres of water, most of which can never be used again.

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Cut Price $149.99

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If you have any queries regarding products in this catalogue please contact Mining Industry Warehouse Inc.

ICE CUTS
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All stock must go to clear space for new orders.
so come in today and grab a bargain...

Get wired for sound

3 CORDLESS HEADPHONES

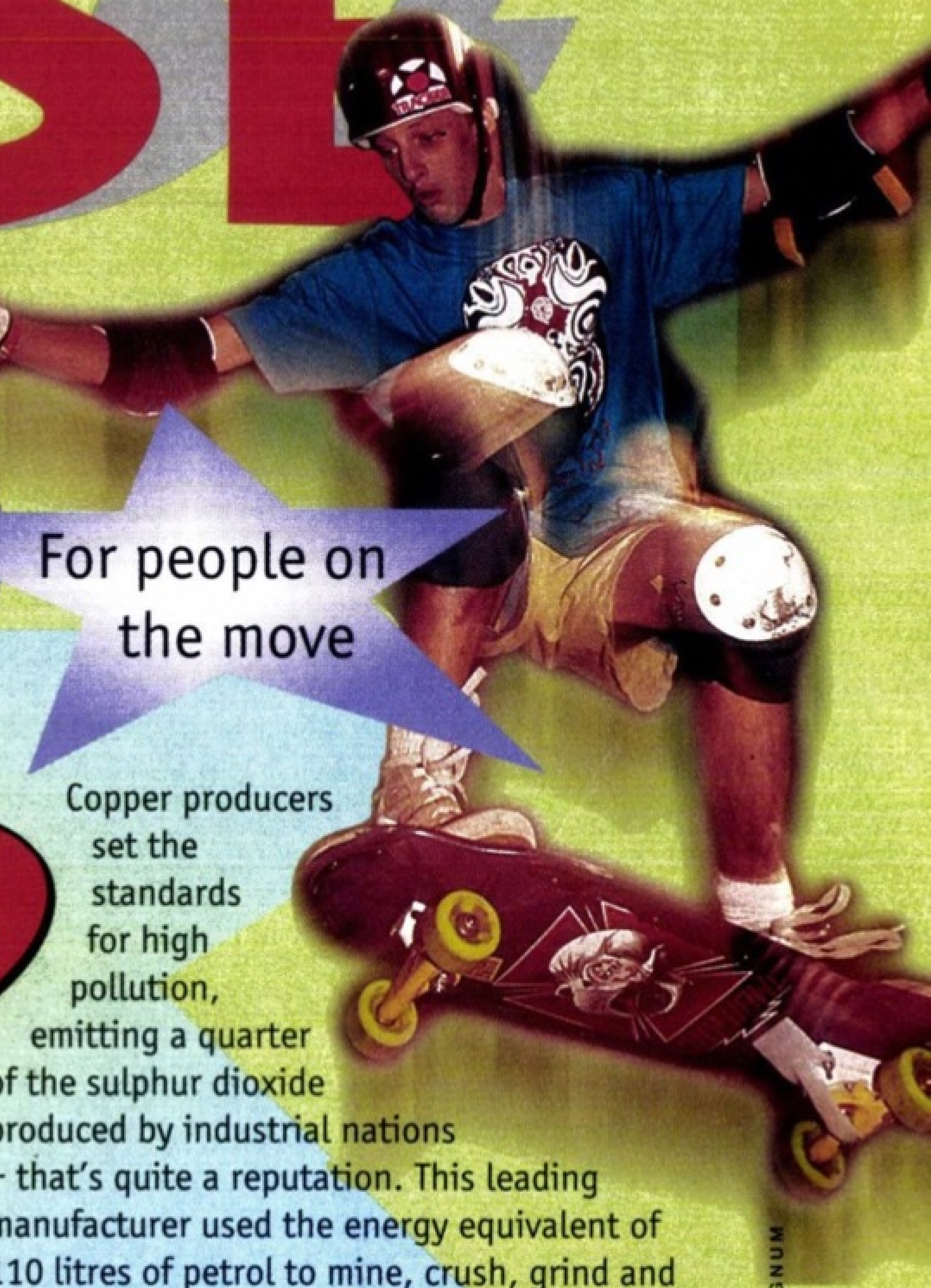
With these cordless headphones, you can now listen to your favourite music anytime. The network of copper wire encased in plastic transmits *music to your ears.*

Tune in, relax and appreciate the technology that made one gram of copper from one kilo of copper-sulphide ore and left at least two kilos of waste rock. To make pure copper wire for these lightweight headphones, copper ore is pulverized, mixed with water and chemicals, boiled and smelted – *with* sulphur dioxide *and* acid rain *as added extras.*

Compact and stylish

reliable brand

For people on the move



Copper producers set the standards for high pollution, emitting a quarter of the sulphur dioxide produced by industrial nations – that's quite a reputation. This leading manufacturer used the energy equivalent of 110 litres of petrol to mine, crush, grind and smelt enough copper for these headphones. With this high-tech, quality-brand product we offer a twelve-month warranty. Batteries not included.

Cut Price $59.50

MICHAEL K NICHOLS / MAGNUM

Cook up a storm

Heats food fast!

Family size

price slashed by 30%

4 LARGE PRESSURE COOKER

This aluminium pressure cooker is great for nutritious meals of steamed rice and vegetables. So you can cook with ease, large areas of land have been strip-mined – destroying more surface area than any other type of mining. To make this lightweight pot weighing only two kilograms we used five kilograms of bauxite.

We've done the hard work so you don't have to: we took the bauxite and crushed it, then mixed it with caustic soda and heated, pressurized, filtered and baked it with calcium oxide. This made 2.6 kilograms of aluminium-oxide powder plus traces of caustic soda and 1.6 kilograms of our renowned 'red mud', a skin-burning mixture of oxidized metals and other toxins.

As well as using lots of water, *we contaminated it* by allowing toxins to leach out of the settling pond into local groundwater. *But there's more* – processing the aluminium-oxide powder produced carbon dioxide and perflurocarbons, greenhouse gases which trap thousands of times more heat per molecule than carbon dioxide. *We will stop at nothing to give you convenience at cheap cost.* A third of the price off, for a limited time only.

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MI WAREHOUSE has thousands of stores – there's one near you.

WE MIGHT BE CRAZY, BUT WE'RE CHEAP!

Where there's smoke there's fire: workers don't breathe easy at La Oroya.

Moving mountains

Stephanie Boyd looks at life under the helmet in Peru's mining towns.

A LARGER-THAN-LIFE metallic replica of a miner's helmet shelters a solitary bench overlooking the small mining town of Morococha, on the slopes of Peru's Central Sierra. Beneath the giant helmet, through the cold winter drizzle and muddy backdrop, rows of single-story workers' lodgings are distinguished by their red roofs and yellow sides – an attempt at creating colour in a world of greys and browns.

Chemical pollution from the mine killed off most things green or life-sustaining in this place years ago. Now even the large, shallow pond spreading out from the lookout point is stagnant, its surface patterned with various shades of murky water.

The monument is a tribute to those who labour in Peru's most important industry – comprising 20 per cent of the country's GDP – but its view is a stark reminder of the workers' share of this multi-billion-dollar pie. State-owned mines like Morococha have no difficulty finding or exploiting labourers. Discredited and weak unions, government corruption, high unemployment and Peru's unrelenting neoliberal economic policy have left many miners feeling lucky simply to have a job. But the Peruvian Government's drive to privatize its consortium of state-run mining industries, known as 'Centromin', is threatening even this dystopia.

Concepts like workers' rights and health-and-safety standards have no place in today's global mining race and since the early 1990s the Peruvian Government has accelerated its liberalization to join the leading contestants. To attract foreign investors, the Government has devastated mining communities with a series of mass firings and 'invitations' to retire (those who did not accept their 'invitation' with its meagre stipends were fired). Ex-Centromin workers, still wearing their yellow helmets, beg for change on the streets of Lima. Others return to their farming families or cluster in makeshift camps on the outskirts of mining settlements.

In 1990 Centromin had more than 17,000 miners – now there are around 8,000. They are left grappling with salary reductions and the threat of being replaced by cheaper contract workers who have even less job security or benefits.

Few miners believe that the rules for state-run mining companies – provision of housing, schooling, medical care, electricity, water and 'a dignified salary' for their workers – will be followed by the new companies. Already, the regulations for private mines have been cut to a bare minimum and even these are regularly stretched.

With over 200 new mining-exploration missions, the promise of high-tech new mines lights up dollar signs in the eyes of global shareholders and executives. Centromin's employees have good cause to be concerned about their future.

Some workers look back to their colonial past to predict what life will be like after privatization. Ruben Chavez Velasquez, a 33-year-old winch operator, says older workers tell him; 'There was much exploitation then, but miners were paid bonuses on top of their salary for extra work so they said the money made up for the hardship.' But Ramon Pajuelo, a Peruvian scholar, says the older workers' nostalgia is a throwback to an out-dated colonial mindset and hopes the younger, more nationalistic generation will not be afraid to demand their rights from new foreign bosses.

Centromin's formation in the mid-1970s (from the expropriated holdings of the US Cerro de Pasco Mining Corporation) coincided with the beginning of the 'golden years' of Peruvian labour movements. The adoption of a standard IMF reform package pushed unions into mobilizing a series of strikes and rallies that eventually brought a return to democratic government in 1980. The unions' influence peaked and they won an eight-hour workday, minimum safety regulations and the provision of basic living standards now enshrined in law.

Somewhat ironically, Peru's return to democracy signalled the advent of Sendero Luminoso's (Shining Path) armed struggle, with devastating results for the trade-union movement. In their quest to become the sole 'voice of the people',

KEN EAKIN

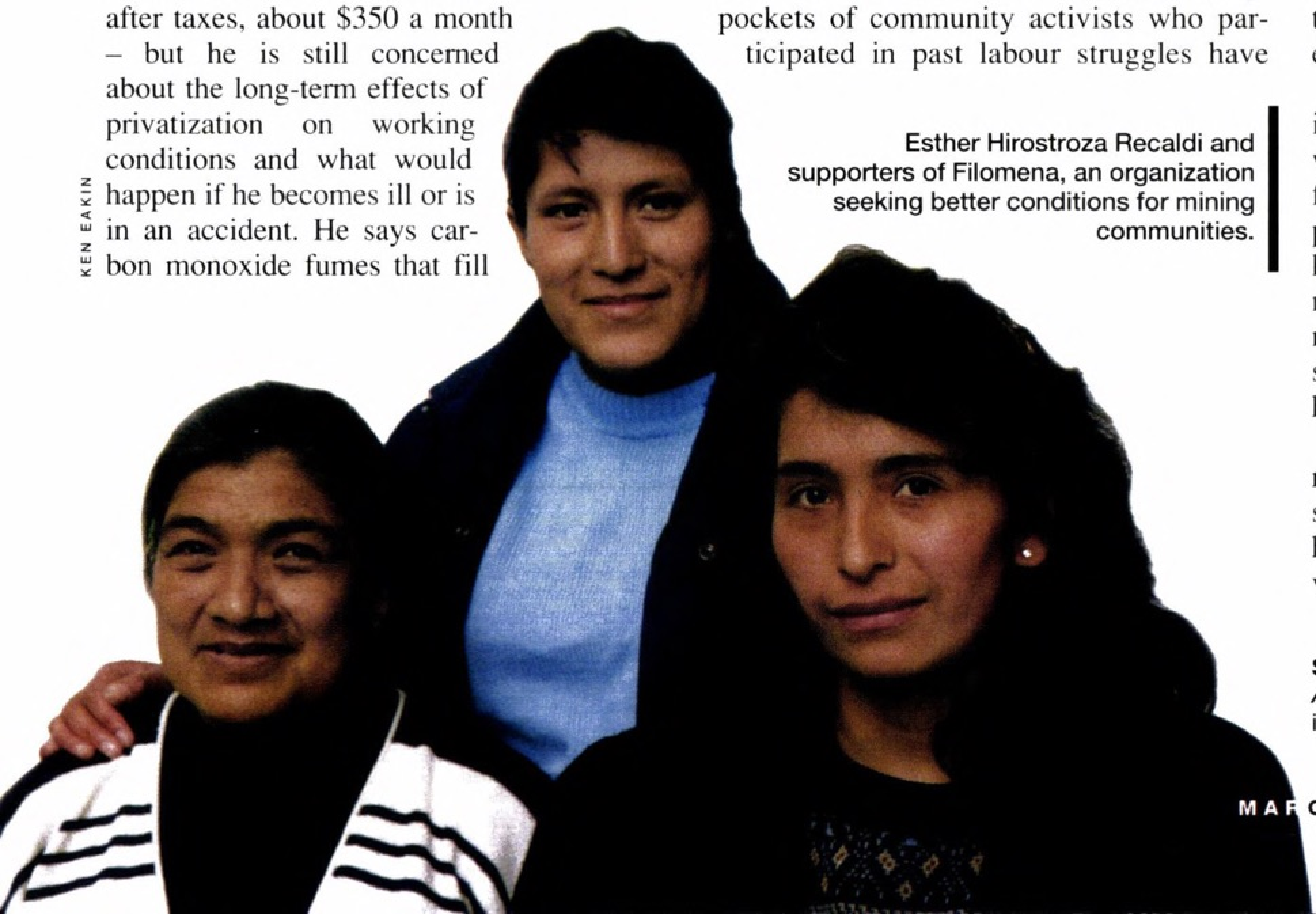
Sendero threatened, intimidated and allegedly murdered union leaders and members who refused to join their ranks.

At the same time, Sendero's infiltration of the unions provided President Fujimori's Government with the perfect excuse to repress all union activity. Sadly, thousands of innocent workers and campaigners were caught between Sendero's activities and the Government's anti-terrorism campaign. Pedro Huillca, former leader of Peru's main labour union and a vocal campaigner for miner's rights, was assassinated in 1992. The Government blamed his death on Sendero, but an ex-secret-service agent has now come forward claiming an élite army unit was responsible.

The legacy of this oppression still weighs heavily on the struggling unions. Hoping for a popular revival, they are scrambling to build support and prove their legitimacy with new and prospective employers. But many miners are still afraid of discrimination if they are perceived as union advocates, or are simply too disillusioned to back the labour movement. Throughout Centromin communities, the general mood is one of tense anticipation. The questions on everyone's lips are who will buy the remaining mines slated for sale in 1998, or, in cases of mines already sold, what the new owners have in store.

The mine where Ruben works has recently been bought by a Peruvian company, but he is not sure whether this will be better or worse than working in a state-owned mine. 'We will have to wait and see,' he says a bit nervously.

Ruben's family lives in La Oroya, the crossroads of Centromin's mining activities. He travels to a mine 40 kilometres away in San Cristóbal. Because he is a specialized labourer, needing two years of training to operate his machine, he is not overly worried about losing his own job. He also makes a good salary for a miner – after taxes, about $350 a month – but he is still concerned about the long-term effects of privatization on working conditions and what would happen if he becomes ill or is in an accident. He says carbon monoxide fumes that fill the mine tunnels often impair everyone's vision. And while at work, 'I am forever afraid of rocks falling on my head'.



KEN EAKIN

Esther Hirostroza Recaldi and supporters of Filomena, an organization seeking better conditions for mining communities.

Last October, Ruben's friend, also a winch operator, was killed by a rock slide while checking the front of his machine. The man, about Ruben's age, left behind a wife and young daughter. Although the company is required to provide insurance, the family was soon poor. 'It's not even insurance really, just 2,000-3,000 soles ($750-$1,200), no more,' complains Ruben bitterly. Compared to his co-workers, Ruben considers himself lucky because the cab of his machine offers ventilation and some protection from accidents. Still, he grows quiet when speaking of silicosis and tuberculosis: 'Sooner or later most miners succumb to some form of respiratory disease.'

The hazards are not confined to the mine – nor to the miners. Ketty Anticona Bamos, a doctor with a non-governmental organization (NGO) health clinic in La Oroya, says about 90 per cent of the town's population has unacceptable levels of iron in their blood. Children are particularly affected by exposure to iron which gives rise to low birth weights and learning disabilities. People also suffer from high incidence of cancer, anaemia and infertility. Although levels of contamination are greater amongst those living closer to the plants, the pollution is so widespread that it is inescapable – even the daily routine of washing clothes in the river exposes people to dangerous toxins.

Adding to citizens' concern is the company's apparent refusal to enter discussions. And the lack of a strong national union has left each Centromin community isolated, without the means or power to negotiate.

But the view from under the miner's helmet in Peru is not yet – and never has been – set in stone. Rather than giving up, pockets of community activists who participated in past labour struggles have regrouped. Mining agitators say there is a new form of organization brewing. Acutely aware of the global forces affecting the mining industry, these groups are infiltrating the enemy's home territory – seeking foreign aid and support from unions and governments in North America and Europe.

'Filomena' is an organization seeking better conditions for mining communities. It was named after Filomena Tomaira Pacsi, a 19-year-old miner's wife who died in childbirth in Lima, in 1982, after marching 185 kilometres from the Canaria mine in Ayacucho to demand improved wages and terms for mineworkers.

'Filomena' and two other local groups recently decided to band together. These groups were frustrated with the decline of worker's unions and felt a need to act to alleviate the social pressures which followed privatizations. The new coalition is still in its planning stages, but hopes to join forces with unions and municipal officials to demand miners' rights and implement social and environmental projects throughout Centromin communities.

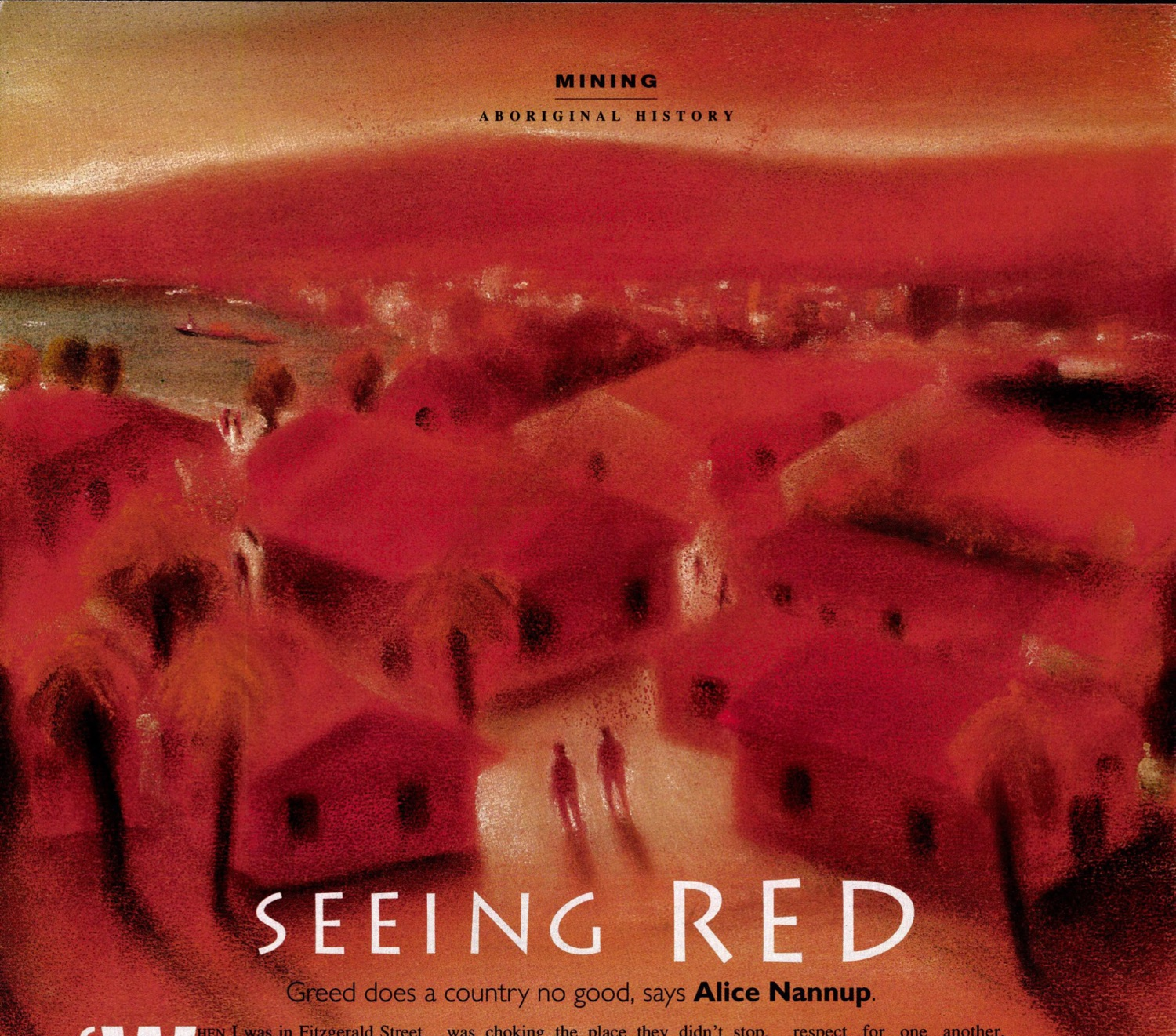
'I have seen Canadian miners with cars and nice houses. All we are asking for is basic human rights'

But funding is tight and without government support their work is difficult. José De Echave, an economist with the coalition, believes the key is reaching corporations before they arrive in Peru. He and Esther Hinostroza Recaldi from Filomena have visited Canadian mining unions to exchange information and make contacts with prospective investors. José tries to convince companies that the future of sustainable mining development is in cultivating a fair workplace with proper environmental standards.

After weathering over 20 years of mining struggles to improve the living and working conditions of miners and their families, Esther is confident the new companies will eventually listen to them. She knows organized action is capable of moving mountains: 'I have seen Canadian miners with cars and nice houses,' she says. 'All we are asking for is basic human rights.'

When asked what will happen if the new companies refuse to negotiate, Esther sets her jaw in determination. 'They will have to listen to us,' she says flatly. 'We won't stop bothering them until they do.' ■

Stephanie Boyd is the associate editor of *Latin America Press*, a weekly news publication based in Lima, Peru.



SEEING RED

Greed does a country no good, says **Alice Nannup**.

'WHEN I was in Fitzgerald Street Aunty Jean was still up in Port Hedland, and she used to come down and stay with me for a couple of weeks at a time. Her hair was that red I'd say to her, "Aunty, what's the matter with your hair? You been dying it?"

"No," she'd say, "it's the iron-ore, it's all over everything."

That's the mining that did that, all that tearing up of the earth to get to minerals. When they first talked about getting the iron-ore and putting it on Finucane Island, the Aborigines up there were very upset. That island was a ceremonial ground, it was only 500 yards across from the mainland, so when the tide went out those Aborigines would go there to have their rituals.

I was up there when that iron-ore first started, when they started loading it on to the boats, and the dust kicked up was terrible. It was really red and it blew from east to west, all over the port. Hedland used to be such a beautiful town but it's ruined now.

Even when they could see how the dust was choking the place they didn't stop, they just kept on going. They even tried putting hoses and sprinklers to stop it from blowing around but it didn't work. When I used to come in from Hillside I couldn't believe it, everything you touched was red. Even the poinciana trees lost their beauty, and they used to be the pride of Port Hedland when they were flowering.

All that mining and destroying the land is something that worries me a lot. It's not only happening in the Pilbara either, it's everywhere, the world is off its axis, they're destroying everything just to make money.

To me, Australia is a big country, and it's crying poverty today, all through people being greedy. Greed is a terrible thing, and I think everyone should be equal.

It makes me very sad to say this but I don't think I'll see a time when there will be true equality in this country, because to me it's too far gone. I believe there is a time when Jesus comes back and they say there will be a new heaven and a new earth. But until then I don't think it will change. That is if people don't develop a

respect for one another,
and a respect for our land,
and stop tearing this beautiful
country apart.

I saw some people on the telly the other day, trying to stop these bulldozers from going through and destroying a forest. I felt sorry for those poor people, because they were the ones getting arrested and made to stand aside. The people who were behind it, the greedy ones who don't care what they're destroying, they were allowed to keep on going...There's too much machinery ripping up the country and putting nothing back into it. It really makes me wonder what's going to be left for future generations.' ■

ILLUSTRATION: LIZ PYLE

Extract from *When the Pelican Laughed* by Alice Nannup*, Lauren Marsh and Stephen Kinnane 1992 (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, PO Box 320, South Fremantle, Western Australia 6162).

***Alice Nannup was born in the Pilbara, Western Australia in 1911. She was taken from her community at the age of 12 and sent south to work as a domestic servant. After her marriage in 1932 she raised ten children. Known as 'Nan', she lived in Geraldton surrounded by friends and extended family until she died in 1995.**

Diamond dogs of war

When mining companies have a problem troops do their talking, reports **Roger Moody**.

MURPHY / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

On guard: a mercenary on the scent of rebellion in Bougainville.

SITTING in a slick office above his mine, which has stolen resources from one of the poorest countries in the world, the manager of DiamondWorks in Sierra Leone can feel secure. Just a phonecall away is his own band of mercenaries equipped with Boeing-727 planes, helicopter gunships and a brace of sophisticated weaponry including fuel-air explosives which suck out oxygen upon detonation and destroy all life within a 1.6-kilometre radius.

Mercenaries have bloodied the battle fields of sub-Saharan Africa for decades. In the 1960s and 1970s they were usually employed by rebels to fight elected governments. Now they say they are loyal to the governments themselves. They sell themselves as a one-way ticket to economic growth, an end to terrorism and restoration of law and order.

But in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, many resent this imposition of 'order' and have been fighting their own battles for genuine security. Sullay Kamara and the newly formed ORIENT (Organization for Research and Extension of Intermediate Technology) took on one of Africa's toughest environmental challenges when they set up in 1984. Their aim was to make huge Swiss and US mining companies pay for ripping off Sierra Leone and to rehabilitate land ruined by indiscriminate mining. Working on a shoestring (one battered typewriter and no telephone) ORIENT started several projects before the decade was out. Then, in 1991, the Liberian civil war spilled over the border into Sierra Leone and the country was plunged into bloody chaos.

They sell themselves as a one-way ticket to economic growth, an end to terrorism and restoration of order

Four years later, South African-led hired soldiers marched into the capital, Freetown, officially to defeat the rebels. But within a year, the mercenaries had taken over the country's richest diamond mines and were siphoning out the profits. 'We went from one kind of foreign domination to another,' Kamara told me last November. 'When will we achieve true independence?'

In the past, the troops have been rewarded in cash. Today they are just as likely to get paid in mineral concessions – and entire mines. As a result, the most valuable diamond deposits in Sierra Leone and Angola and gold resources in Uganda have fallen into the hands of companies that are simply facades for the mercenaries. The most powerful of these outfits are controlled by just four men: ex-army officers Eeben Barlow, Tim Spicer and Anthony Buckingham, plus the Canadian financier Robert Friedland. They own Executive Outcomes (EO), Branch Energy, Lifeguard and Sandline, which occupy an impressive glass and brickwork office in south-west London, Britain.

The devious web woven by these and similar set-ups now entangles much of the developing world. But it is in Sierra Leone and Angola that they first cut their teeth, and where their subversive influence is greatest.

It started in 1993, when Barlow brought his private army of mercenaries, known as EO, to Angola. He did a deal with the diamond-mining company Branch Energy which was controlled by British ex-army officer and businessman, Anthony Buckingham. Some of Buckingham's money was then used to pay EO to recapture territory and diamond mines occupied by rebel forces.

Just over a year later, EO was invited by Sierra Leone's military leader, Valentine Strasser, to 'restore order' when the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) stormed through Kono district and occupied one of the world's most valuable diamond fields at Koidu. Once again EO bombarded rebel forces and by the end of 1995 Koidu fell into the hands of the mercenaries. Branch Energy just happened to be in Sierra Leone at the time and a month after fighting ceased they took over the mine.

The Koidu concession could soon produce no less than three million carats of diamonds a year (nearly a third of South Africa's annual production). Officially it was sold to Branch Energy by the Sierra Leone Government through open-contract bidding. But African editor of *The Economist* Richard Dowden was told a different story by Barlow: 'The Sierra Leone Government just didn't have the money to pay EO. Their first thing, rather than to chase rebels, was to secure this area and start mining.'

Officially EO simply trained and serviced Sierra Leone's army and took no direct part in the fighting. Nonetheless, Barlow admits that EO has 'the right to conduct a pre-emptive strike on anyone who, in future, threatens the people in our company. So we get permission from the Government and if anyone threatens us with fire, we will retaliate.' A magazine correspondent, who accompanied EO as it began its assault on Koidu in 1995, describes what this 'pre-emptive strike' meant in practice: 'Pete, a mercenary from Durban, ordered his troops to set up an 82 mm mortar position... After the mortar pounding, MI-17s flew in with their machine guns on board, blazing away in a broad circle. Any movement in the bush was met with a burst of 762s [machine guns]. The firing seemed to go on for ages.' Another observer, reporter Jim Hooper, said even after the RUF had evacuated the town the bombardment continued for two nights and two days.

The bloody impact of this barrage seemed to fall primarily on civilians. Relief worker Martha Carey, employed by Médicins sans Frontières in Freetown, says: 'I only had to see their helicopters flying over my house to know it was time to rush to the hospital and prepare for an influx of wounded.' To Carey the EO pilots were 'racist killers with no interest in the country'.

In 1996 Branch Energy was bought by a Canadian company, Carson Gold, and merged into a new venture, DiamondWorks. The corporation, which is also a major global explorer of the world's most coveted gem, now has control of Koidu. That close buddy of the mercenaries, the ubiquitous Anthony Buckingham, is the chief shareholder in this new enterprise. But its prime mover is Canadian Robert Friedland, a 48-year old ex-hippy and convicted drug dealer, who is now the world's most ruthless mining promoter.

'These firms have all got people who used to work in British Intelligence and they're all really closely linked to the government'

Friedland applies his talents to mining ventures across the globe – since 1995 he has invested in highly dubious exploits in China, Indonesia, West Papua and Burma. Here, according to David Arnott of the Burma Action Group, 'Friedland has a direct 50/50 copper-mining joint venture with the hated military regime – it's the biggest in the country.'

Launching DiamondWorks at a 1996 private investors 'show case' in Vancouver, company chair, Eric Friedland, Robert's brother and partner in crime, boasted: 'We have unique logistical and security capabilities. We can build the mines in Angola and Sierra Leone and protect them and we can get those stones out and sold on the market.' Once Friedland's DiamondWorks had dug firmly into Sierra Leone, EO pulled out its 200 troops, bequeathing protection at Koidu to two corporate clones, Lifeguard and Sandline International.

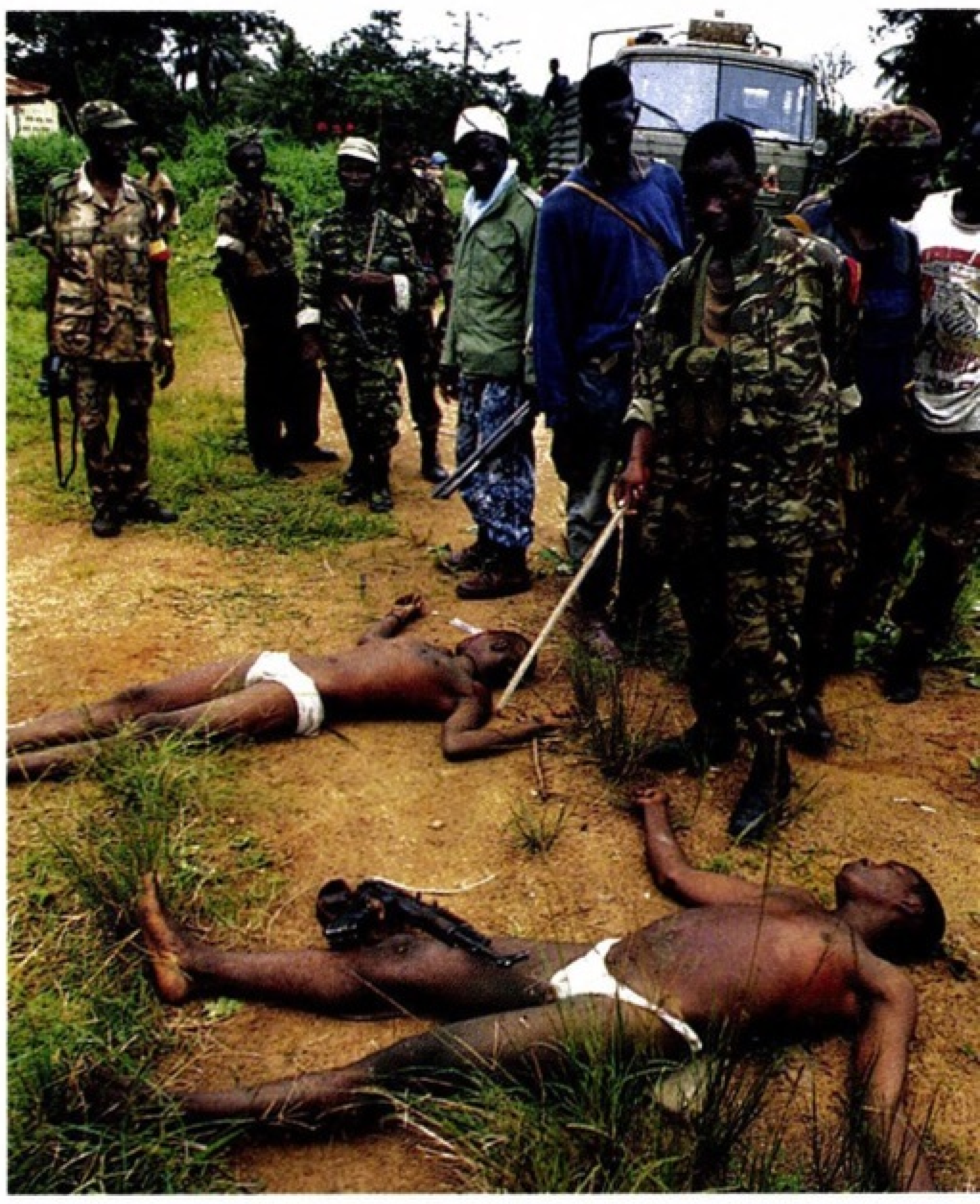
Sandline got its name from the US army's determination to 'draw a line in the sand' in its war on Iraq: it is now the most powerful paramilitary force in Sierra Leone and Angola. Technically owned by Buckingham's Heritage Oil, in practice it is run by his colleague, the British Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer (who also holds 10,000 share options in DiamondWorks).

With little doubt, Spicer is the top diamond dog of war. During 20 years with the British Scots Guards, he's seen active service in Bosnia, the Gulf, Cyprus and Northern Ireland. It was in Belfast a few years ago that two soldiers under Spicer's command killed an unarmed teenager, Peter McBride, by shooting him in the back. Spicer congratulated his soldiers on a 'correct course of action'. But a court of law thought otherwise and sentenced the soldiers to life imprisonment.

Despite such incidents, the escapades of these men have attracted a lot of admiration. Professor Herb Howe of Washington's Georgetown University, who was paid by EO to go to Sierra Leone, speaks of their 'high calibre and standard of training, and excellent record on human rights'. And the respected British *Mining Journal*, in an editorial last April, congratulated Sandline International on 'helping end the mayhem in Sierra Leone'.

But other observers, especially from Africa, are appalled at what these outfits represent and what they have done. The London-based Africa Research and Information Bureau (ARIB) has launched a campaign against their further penetration of the continent. Milius Palayway, from the London-based conflict-resolution group, International Alert, declares: 'Essentially they are re-colonizing Africa. They are taking out mineral resources and leaving behind death, destruction, unimaginable suffering and state instability.'

Palayway advocates international co-operation to curb the activities of private armies but, to date, most governments and international bodies have been indifferent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa is circumvented with the claim – false, as we have seen – that


Mining's death toll – Sierra Leonians killed by mercenaries.

VENTER AL J / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

VENTER AL J / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

mercenaries simply provide training or protection. This fiction has gone so far in the case of Angola, according to Palayway, that the country's main airport at Luanda has been handed over to firms associated with EO, while the diamond mines are policed by private foreign forces, allegedly in cahoots with five Angolan generals. Ironically, says Palayway: 'Government agents are not allowed in those diamond areas. The security companies are like a state within a state.'

Western governments seem even less enthusiastic about curbing mercenaries – not least because they boost weapons manufacture in Europe and elsewhere. EO is estimated to bring in at least $290 million annually to the South African economy, much of it to arms suppliers. 'Nothing these companies do would be contrary to the British Government's wishes,' says David Shearer from the Institute for Strategic Studies. 'These firms have all got people who used to work in British Intelligence and they're all really closely linked to the government.'

This also seems true of the US. A recent high-level conference on mercenaries in Africa, sponsored by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency, was heavily loaded with mercenaries and advocates of armed force to sustain mining activities. Both Barlow and Spicer attended but only a few participants represented African governments or local organizations. Not surprisingly, the conference recommended that mercenaries – far from being shunned – should become 'effective, efficient and loyal'.

It is not just the support of Western governments or the disarray and impoverishment of Third World states which have unleashed the diamond dogs of war. In the modern mining boom, ownership in the global mining industry has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and bigger corporations. Between them, British Rio Tinto and South African-Anglo De Beers control nearly a fifth of the world's metallic resources, and around 90 per cent of the supply of its rough diamonds. At the same time, hundreds of 'junior' exploration and mining outfits are spreading across the globe, backed by heavy splurges of 'venture capital', raised primarily on Canadian stock exchanges: Branch Energy, DiamondWorks and above all Robert Friedland's brace of other companies have all benefited from these willing supporters.

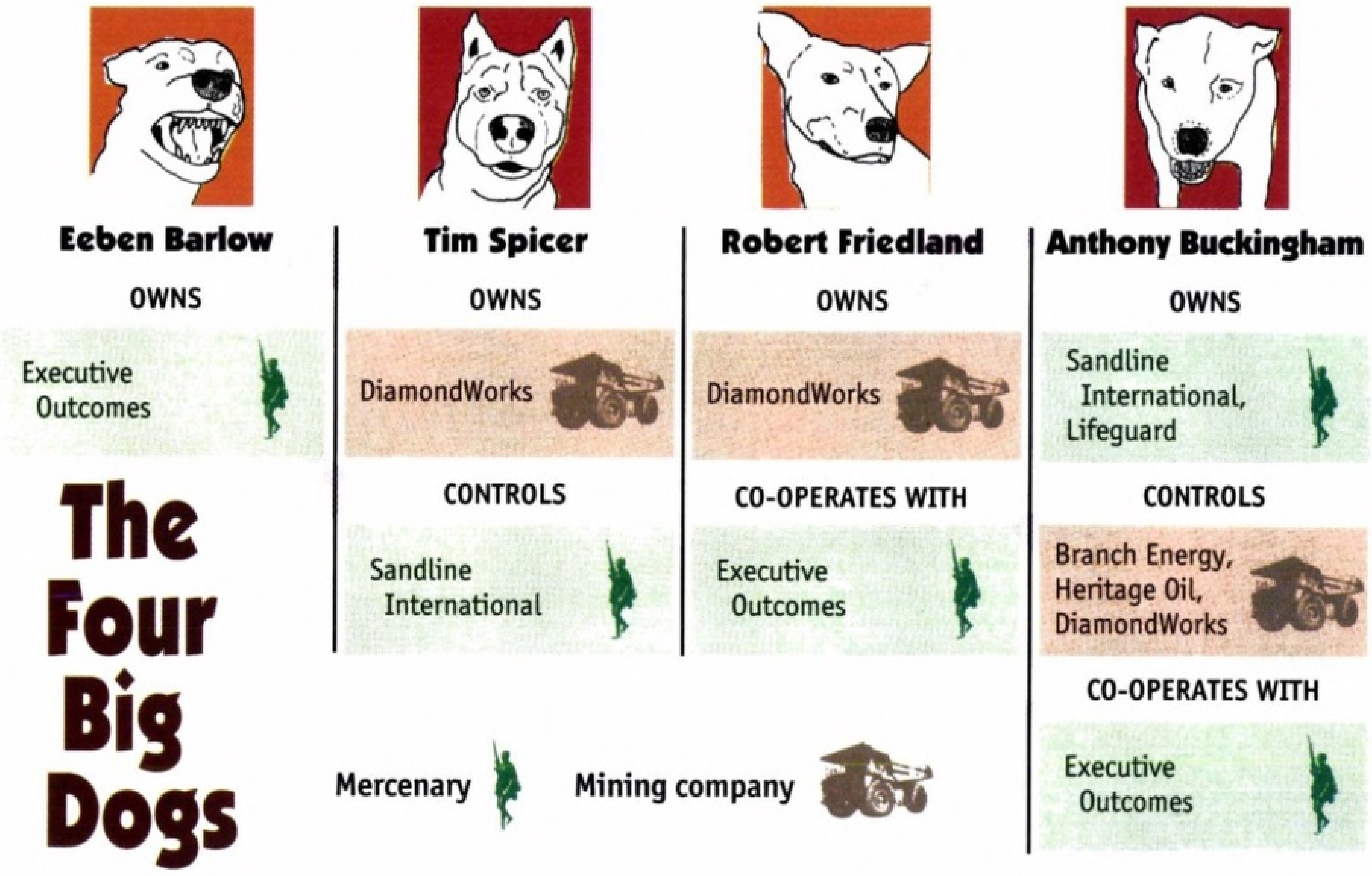
At first sight, the multinationals and their juniors might appear to compete for the same scarce pickings. In practice, they closely co-operate. The smaller fry – as recent West African experience has shown – will go where others fear to tread, perform acts bordering on illegality and then sell their deposits and much of their output to the big boys.

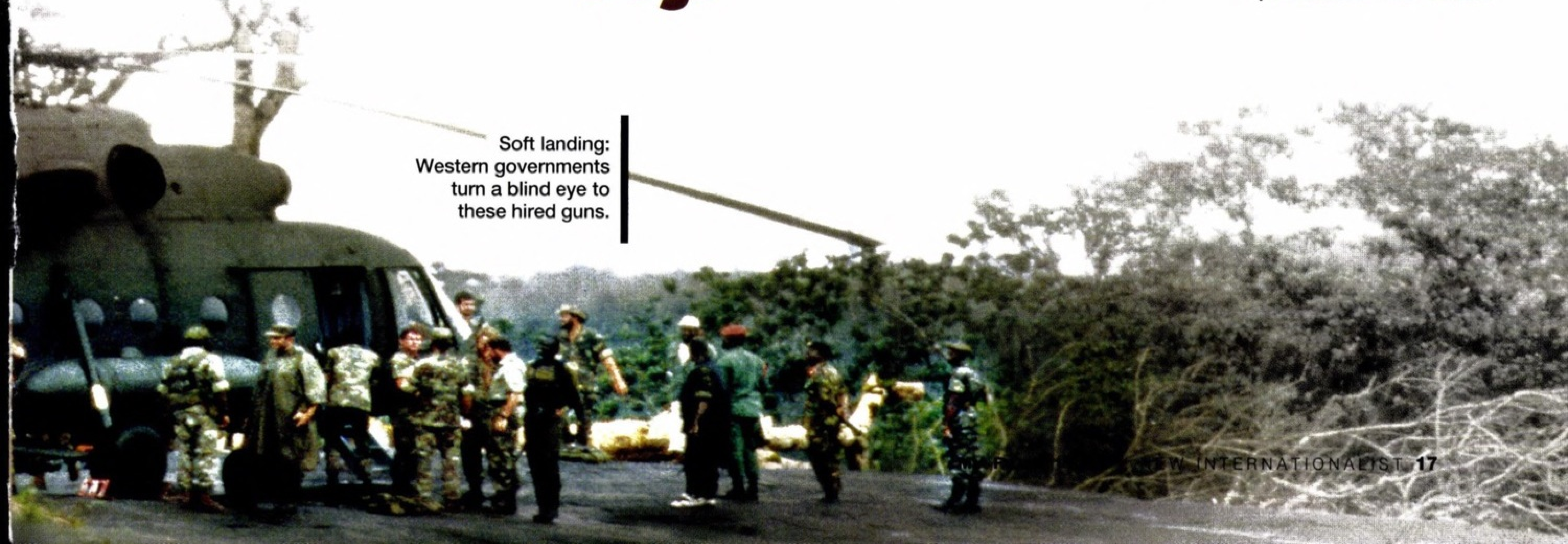
Nor do the latter shy from using paramilitary force themselves. US company Freeport, joined by Rio Tinto, is currently building barracks for the Indonesian regime's notorious armed forces, in order to 'protect' the West Papuan Grasberg mine from the mounting opposition of the Amungme and Komoro indigenous peoples.

As companies push further into new regions, so local opposition increases. From Bougainville in the South Pacific to Alaska in America's far North, the past ten years have seen more and more communities resort to international protests or direct action – usually blockades, occasionally bombs – to stop new mining projects. Instead of respecting land rights, negotiating directly with local people and imposing strict codes of conduct, most mining executives reach instinctively for the phone to summon a posse of soldiers, with bazookas and shotguns protruding from armoured cars.

To contain these mercenary miners, new and enforceable borderlines need to be drawn. But changing the ill-defined legality of mercenaries is only one factor which may obstruct their rise to power. What is really needed is the right of local people to control everything that happens on their land – and to veto mining if they wish. Until that's universally accepted, there is bound to be a calling for these dogs of war. ■

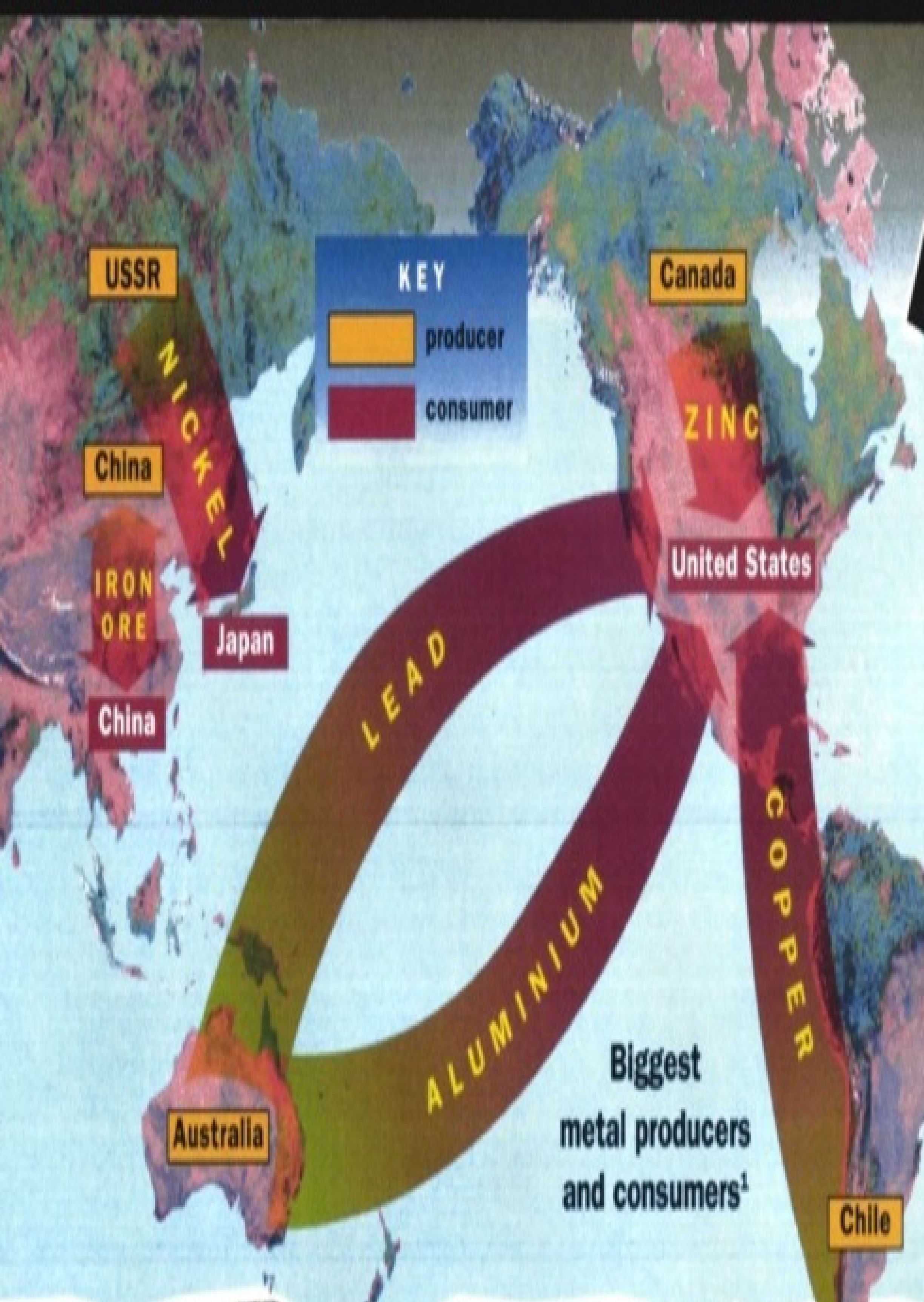
Roger Moody is a consultant for Nostromo Research, a non-profit agency providing information on mining for community organizations in the Third World.





Soft landing: Western governments turn a blind eye to these hired guns.

MINING THE FACTS

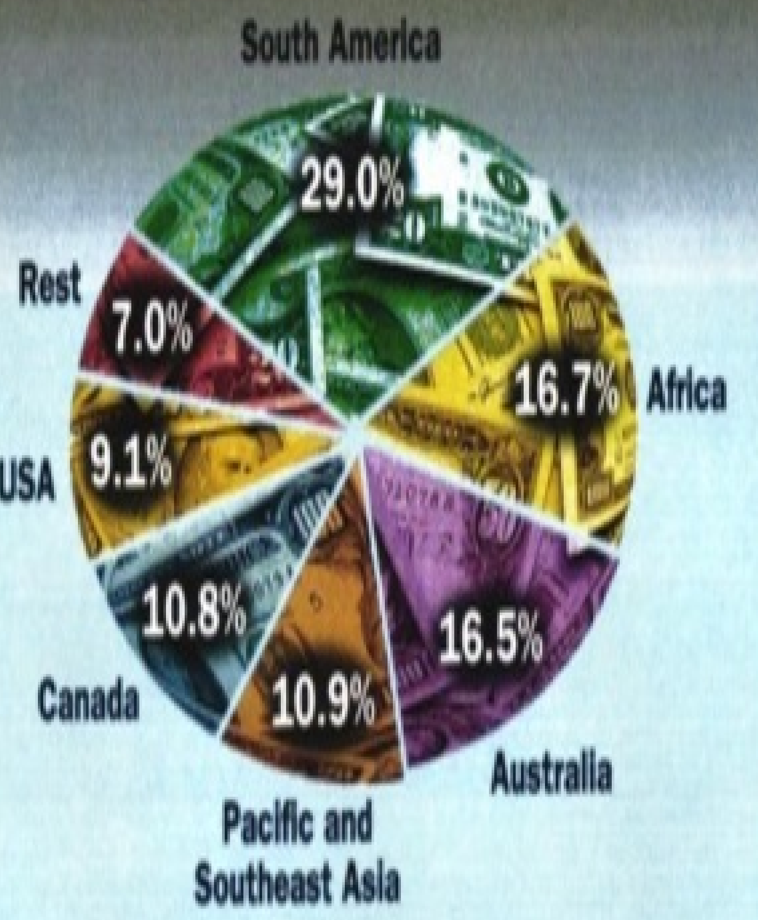


Biggest metal producers and consumers[1]

DO YOU TAKE THIS COMPANY...

The love affair between national governments and mining companies is getting serious – more countries are experiencing large-scale mining than ever before.

Industrialized countries approve of the union: having depleted their own resources, they are now the biggest importers of minerals. Huge quantities are shipped around the world – or travel within countries like China to power industrial centres. The US receives the largest shipments – nearly all of its aluminium and more than 70 per cent of its nickel, chromium and tin come from abroad.



Where companies are spending money on exploration[2]
(Percentage of total spent)

Mining fever

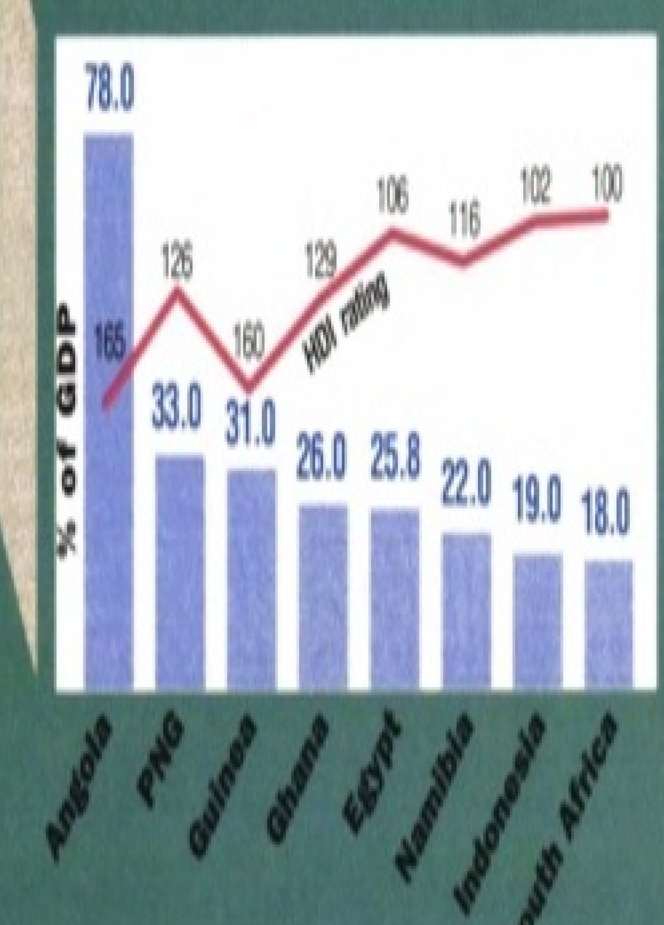
In the global search for minerals, companies consider South America the hottest destination. Liberalization of mining in the 1990s, sale of government mines, cuts to local regulations and large areas of virgin land have made this region particularly attractive.

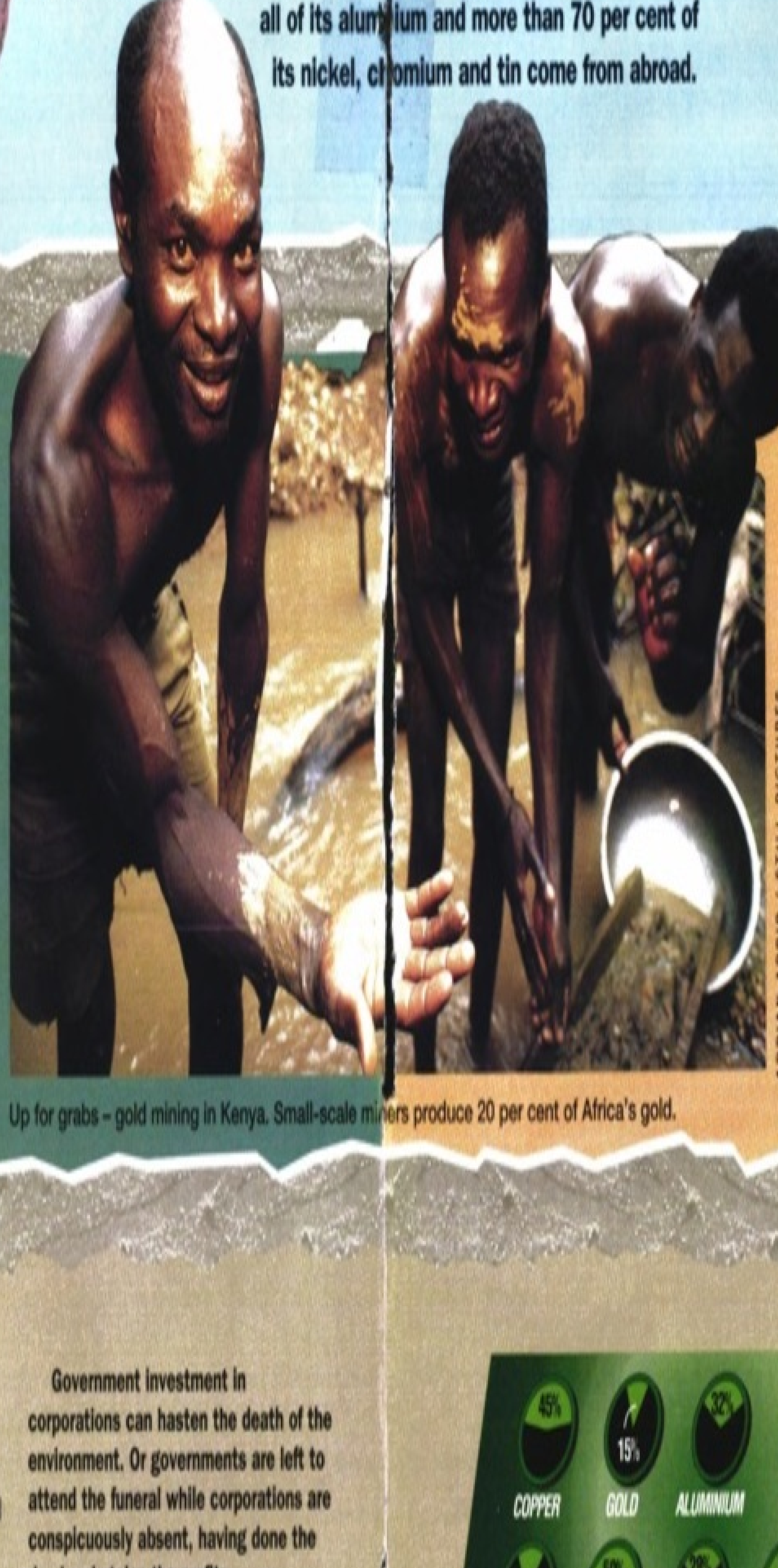
FOR RICHER AND FOR POORER...

Nations where the most mining takes place are also some of the poorest. There is a correlation between the standard of living (measured by the United Nations Development Program Human Development Index – the highest score being one) and the reliance of government on mining. The little money that poor countries get from mining companies is pocketed by international banks, not local people.

Fourteen Majority World countries get at least a third of their export revenues from minerals. Their external debts are 1.4 times greater than their Gross National Product (GNP).

Percentage of Gross Domestic Product from minerals[1] and Human Development Index (HDI) rank out of 174 countries[3]



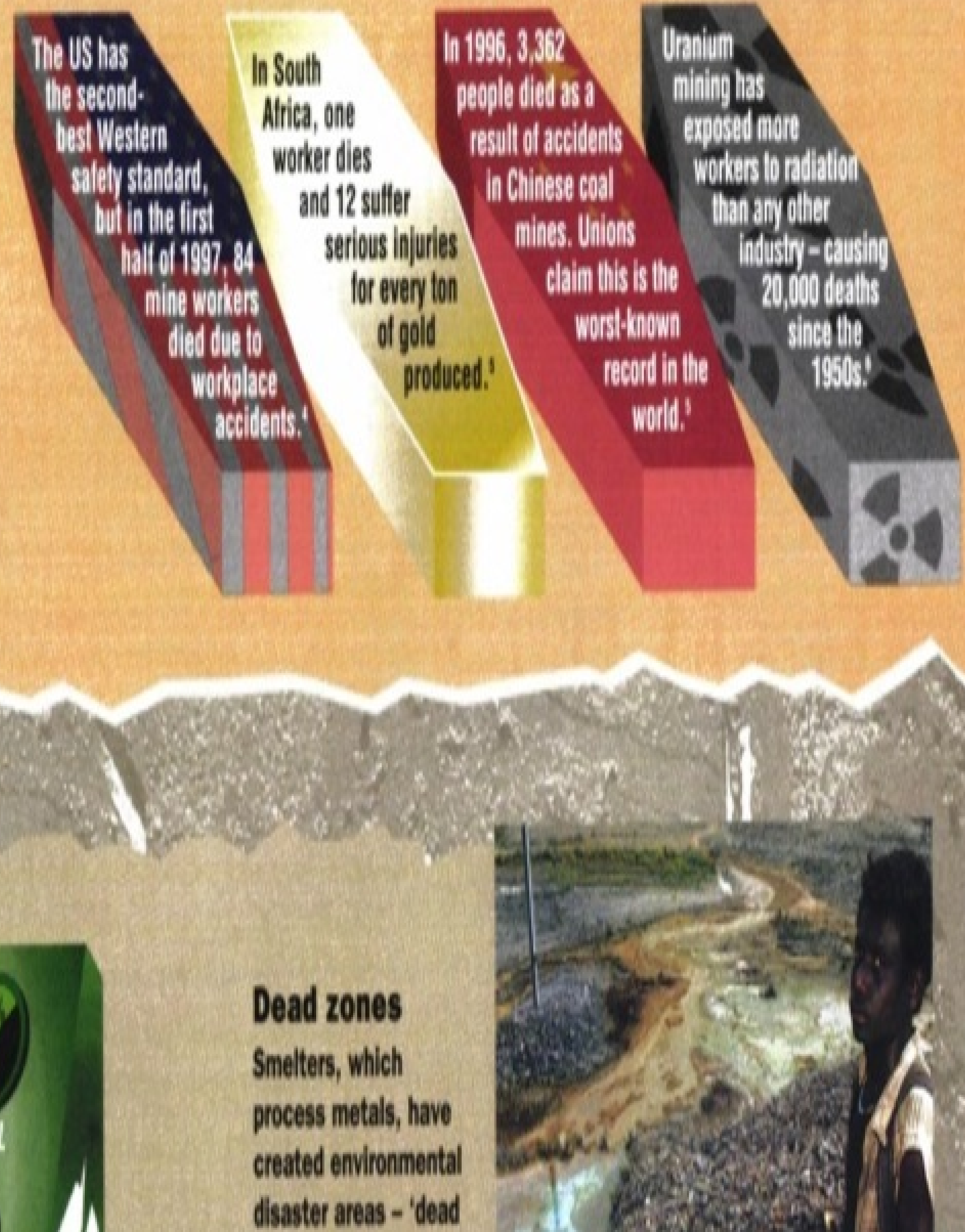


Up for grabs – gold mining in Kenya. Small-scale miners produce 20 per cent of Africa's gold.

ADRIAN ARBIB / STILL PICTURES

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH...

Mining kills and injures more workers than any other industry. The situation is likely to be worse than statistics suggest as corporations and governments keep poor records.



The US has the second-best Western safety standard, but in the first half of 1997, 84 mine workers died due to workplace accidents.[4]

In South Africa, one worker dies and 12 suffer serious injuries for every ton of gold produced.[5]

In 1996, 3,362 people died as a result of accidents in Chinese coal mines. Unions claim this is the worst-known record in the world.[5]

Uranium mining has exposed more workers to radiation than any other industry – causing 20,000 deaths since the 1950s.[6]

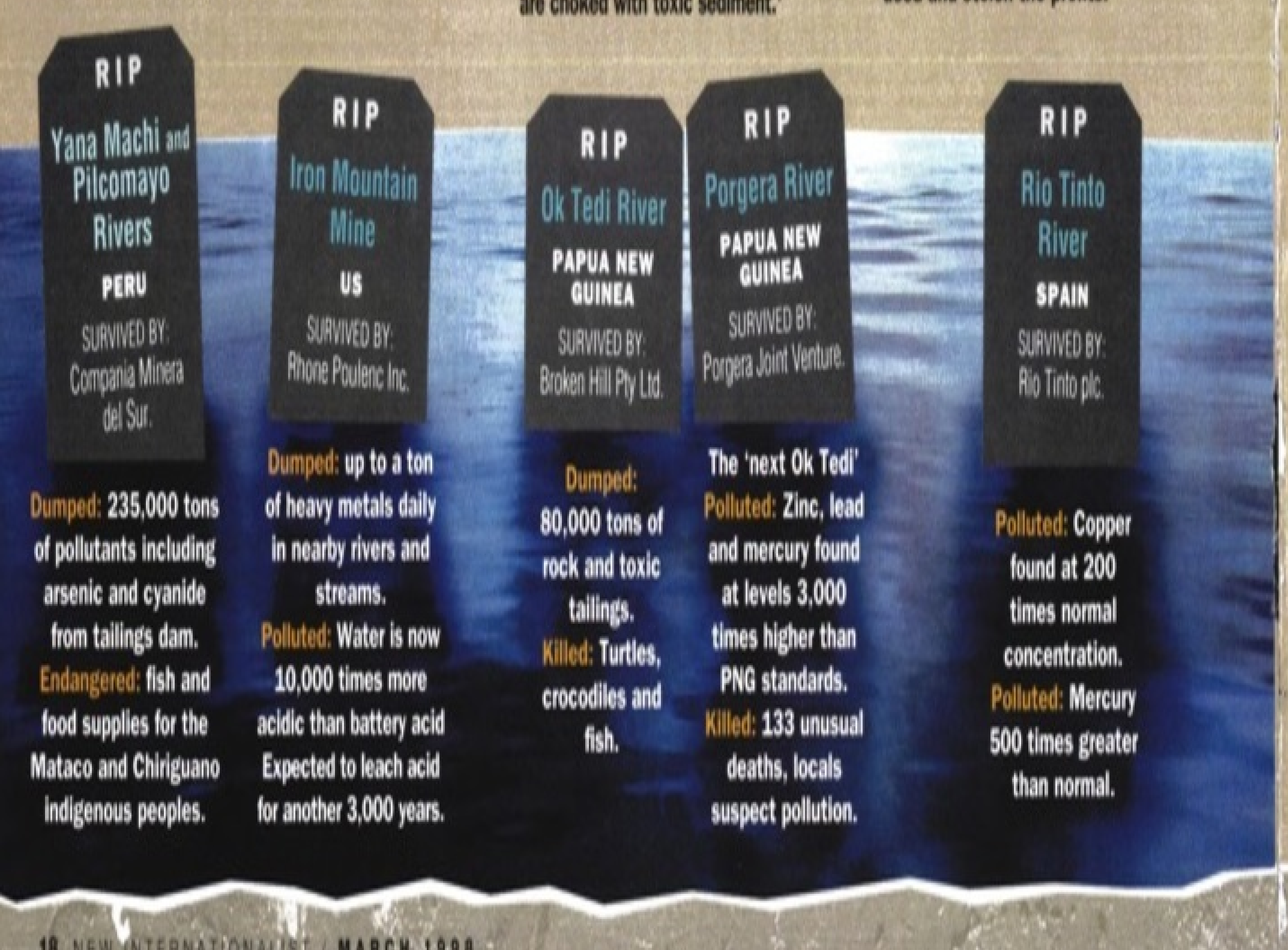
FOR AS LONG AS YOU SHALL LIVE...

The effects of mining live on long after the mine is dead. Mining poisons the air, land and water and then leaves the environment to suffer a slow death.

Watery graves

Many rivers have been pronounced 'biologically dead' due to release of mine tailings (waste from the mine containing rocks, metals and poisons) into lakes and waterways. Aquatic plant and animal life are choked with toxic sediment.[7]

Government investment in corporations can hasten the death of the environment. Or governments are left to attend the funeral while corporations are conspicuously absent, having done the deed and stolen the profits.



RIP
Yana Machi and Pilcomayo Rivers
PERU
SURVIVED BY: Compania Minera del Sur.

Dumped: 235,000 tons of pollutants including arsenic and cyanide from tailings dam.
Endangered: fish and food supplies for the Mataco and Chiriguano indigenous peoples.

RIP
Iron Mountain Mine
US
SURVIVED BY: Rhone Poulenc Inc.

Dumped: up to a ton of heavy metals daily in nearby rivers and streams.
Polluted: Water is now 10,000 times more acidic than battery acid Expected to leach acid for another 3,000 years.

RIP
Ok Tedi River
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
SURVIVED BY: Broken Hill Pty Ltd.

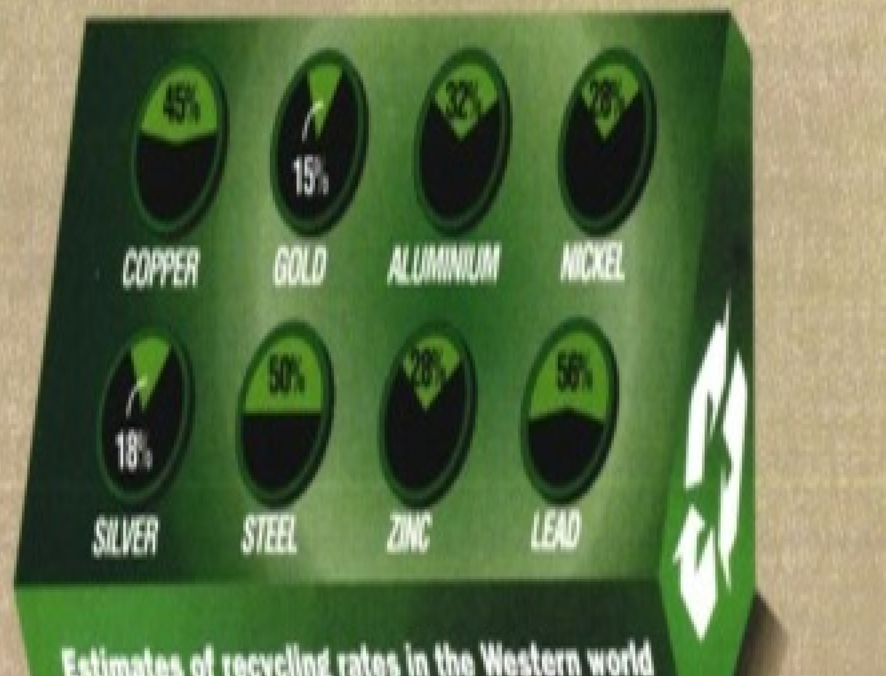
Dumped: 80,000 tons of rock and toxic tailings.
Killed: Turtles, crocodiles and fish.

RIP
Porgera River
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
SURVIVED BY: Porgera Joint Venture.

The 'next Ok Tedi'
Polluted: Zinc, lead and mercury found at levels 3,000 times higher than PNG standards.
Killed: 133 unusual deaths, locals suspect pollution.

RIP
Rio Tinto River
SPAIN
SURVIVED BY: Rio Tinto plc.

Polluted: Copper found at 200 times normal concentration.
Polluted: Mercury 500 times greater than normal.



Estimates of recycling rates in the Western world (US, Japan, Europe and other OECD countries)[8]

Dead waste

Most products made from minerals are dumped after one use. In a lifetime each US citizen uses 1,520 tonnes of new minerals. People in industrial countries consume 19 times as much aluminium, 18 times as many chemicals and 13 times as much iron and steel as people in less-developed countries.

The devastating effect of mining on the environment could be reduced by more recycling. US residents throw away 2.3 million tons of aluminium each year. The energy saved by recycling this waste instead of producing new aluminium could meet the annual electricity needs of Chicago.

Dead zones

Smelters, which process metals, have created environmental disaster areas – 'dead zones' where almost all vegetation has been destroyed. Smelting of copper and other non-ferrous metals releases six million tons of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere each year. This makes up eight per cent of total emissions of the sulphur gas that causes acid rain.

For example, the dead zone around the mining town of Sudbury, Canada, measures 10,400 hectares. Fish have been found dead due to acid fallout in lakes 65 kilometres away.[8]

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[1] *World Resources* 1996-7.
[2] *Minerals Economics Group Survey*, 1997.
[3] *United Nations Development Program Human Development Report* 1996.
[4] US Mines Safety and Health Administration.
[5] Project Underground, Berkeley, US.
[6] Australian Conservation Foundation.
[7] *World Rivers Review* Vol 12 No 5.
[8] Worldwatch Institute Washington DC, US. Figures for steel from International Iron and Steel Institute Brussels, Belgium.

Bricks or gravestones? Mining denies Ghanaians their land, their home and their life.

Mourning the future

Daniel Mensah Brande describes how a gold mine has left Ghanaians homeless.

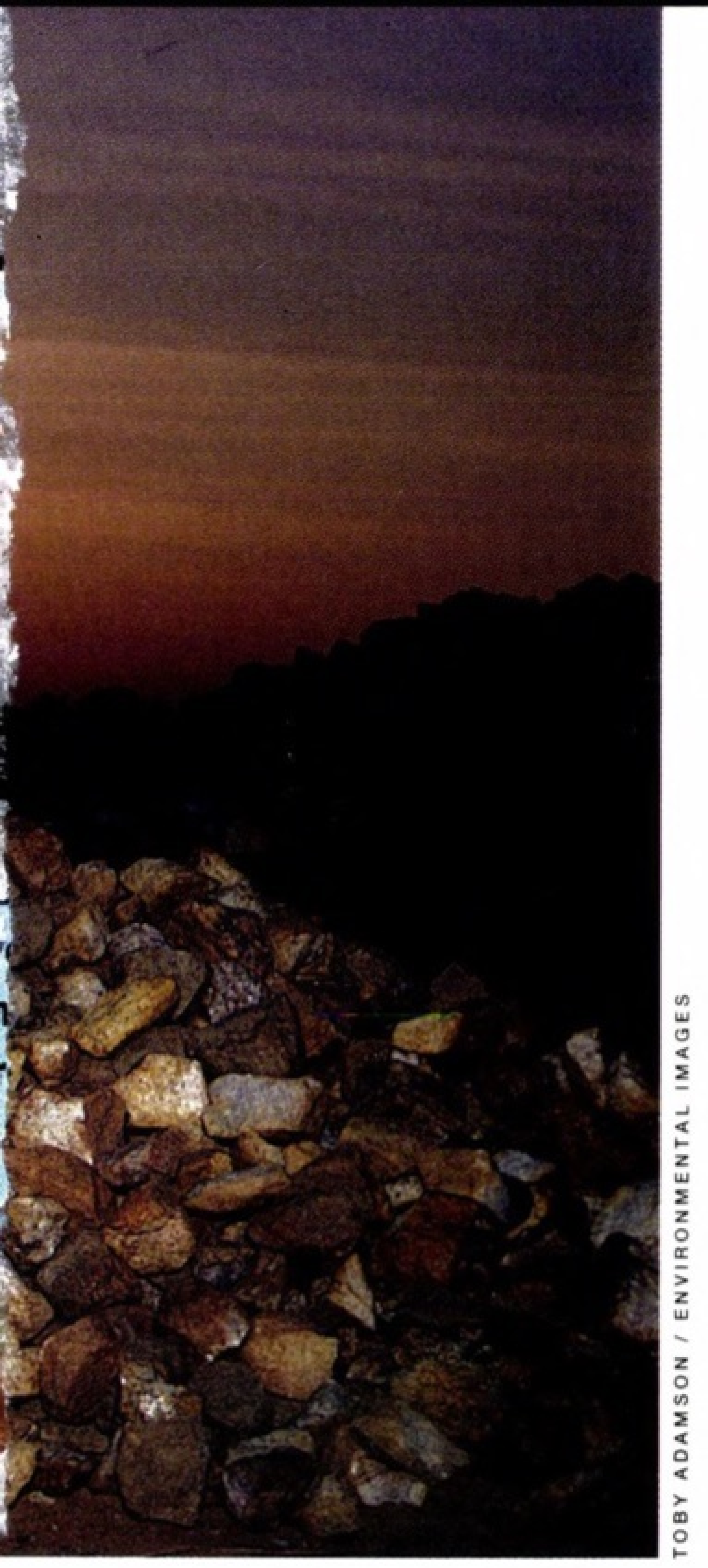
SOMETHING unusual happened to Ghana's highly respected institution of chieftaincy recently. Clad in mourning cloth and wearing red bands to show their uncompromising mood, 42 placard-bearing chiefs demonstrated at the old mining town of Tarkwa. They brought commercial activities to a halt as they took over the streets and kept onlookers wondering what had reduced the traditional rulers to shouting and waving banners. For the chiefs to throw overboard the usual rules of discourse and carry out a demonstration, something dire must be at stake.

It is. The present and future of the chiefs and their communities are being jeopardized by the dozen mining companies carrying out surface mining and the many more prospecting for gold in Ghana's western region. If your home is your future, then the people of Wassa Fiase are homeless. Their future has been poisoned, raped and stripped naked by mining activities. Everywhere in this vast stretch of land, so richly endowed with minerals and green vegetation, there is poverty. You see it on the frustrated faces of landless people and feel it in the tired and faded environment.

'We have been dispossessed of everything here, even our own life,' bemoaned a young man in his thirties. 'All our lands have been snatched for mining; our health is also at the mercy of the mining activities.'

Seven years ago the people of Teberebie, within Wassa Fiase, were lords of their land. They had lived there since the time of their great-grandparents. Then in 1990 the American-Ghanaian gold-mining company, Teberebie Goldfields Limited (TGL) obtained a mining concession. The entire community was uprooted and transplanted. It was the first resettlement exercise carried out in the Wassa area, courtesy of surface mining. Today the people of Teberebie are tenants. They have nothing to call their own. The new settlement is like a tiny island in a vast ocean of mining concessions. Nicholas, a farmer in his sixties, protested: 'When you go to farm anywhere, they say they are mining there and bring a bulldozer to destroy your farm. They say they have bought the land.' Another out-of-work farmer added: 'All the farmers in this area have hung up their scythes.'

The residents are reduced to beggars. 'If you want to put any structure here, you have to ask permission from the mining company. Why do we have to ask permission from a foreign company before we build



TOBY ADAMSON / ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES

on our land?' queried a frustrated youth.

The young people of Teberebie say their future is barren. Their lands have been taken away by a dubious paper document that has no human face. The agreement spelling out the terms of the resettlement was formed after negotiations between the Wassa-West District Assembly and TGL. The mining company was to provide 168 housing units, a school complex, a community centre, electricity, a medical clinic, potable water, access roads, a market, bathhouses and toilets.

The agreement was signed by the Teberebie chief on behalf of his people. An examination of the documents indicates he could neither read nor write – he thumbprinted his signature. Did he know what he was doing and the implications it would have for his people? Was the gold-mining company dealing fairly with the people of Teberebie?

The document certainly ignored vital issues concerning their development. For example, it failed to make provisions for the expansion of the community or erection of new buildings for the rapidly increasing population. The agreement stipulated that the 168 housing units would be ready within 12 months, but nearly seven years after the agreement was signed the company has not reached that target. The housing units have no kitchens or bathrooms. Instead TGL constructed communal kitchens and bathhouses where residents wait in single-file for their turn to cook or wash. The concept of privacy has been thrown into the dustbin – even the chief's wife joins the long queue at the kitchen, waiting to prepare meals for her husband. When she has cooked the food, she will return to the 'palace' built by TGL for the chief. It has three bedrooms but no hall, no kitchen, no toilet and no bathroom.

Large cracks have developed in almost all the houses due to the frequent blasting of dynamite. The people fear a storm will cause their small, cracked, oven-like houses to collapse. In addition, TGL has not provided a medical centre. They have built a well-equipped clinic nearby to serve workers of the mining company, but locals must travel eight kilometres to Tarkwa for medical services.

Teberebie still lacks other items laid down in the agreement, such as electricity, a market, access roads and a community centre. The company has constructed two bore holes for the 2,000 residents of Teberebie, but only one is functioning. With clean water in short supply, many have resorted to fetching water from streams although these are said to be heavily polluted with deadly chemicals used in the mining process, such as arsenic and cyanide. Many inhabitants complain of skin rashes, which they attribute to the contaminated water they drink. Though no tests have been conducted to confirm this, the rashes were not prevalent in the area before surface mining began.

If your home is your future, then the people of Wassa Fiase are homeless

The Teberebie community is usually engulfed in dust from the mine, except when it rains. Then the people worry about flooding – the area has no drainage system and the slightest downpour converts it into a lake.

The locals protest they have the worst of all worlds. TGL refuses to employ them, recruiting migrant labourers instead. 'We have able-bodied men and women here capable of weeding, carrying sand and doing other menial jobs associated with mining,' fumed an old man. An elder of the town summed up the injustice: 'If you have driven us from our land and prevented us from farming, then find us work to do! Why do you offend us by refusing to employ our youth?'

The company apparently feels the financial benefits they have given the people are compensation enough. During the past seven years the people of Teberebie have received an equivalent of $4,000 in royalties. In other words, each of the 2,000 current residents has received the princely sum of two dollars.

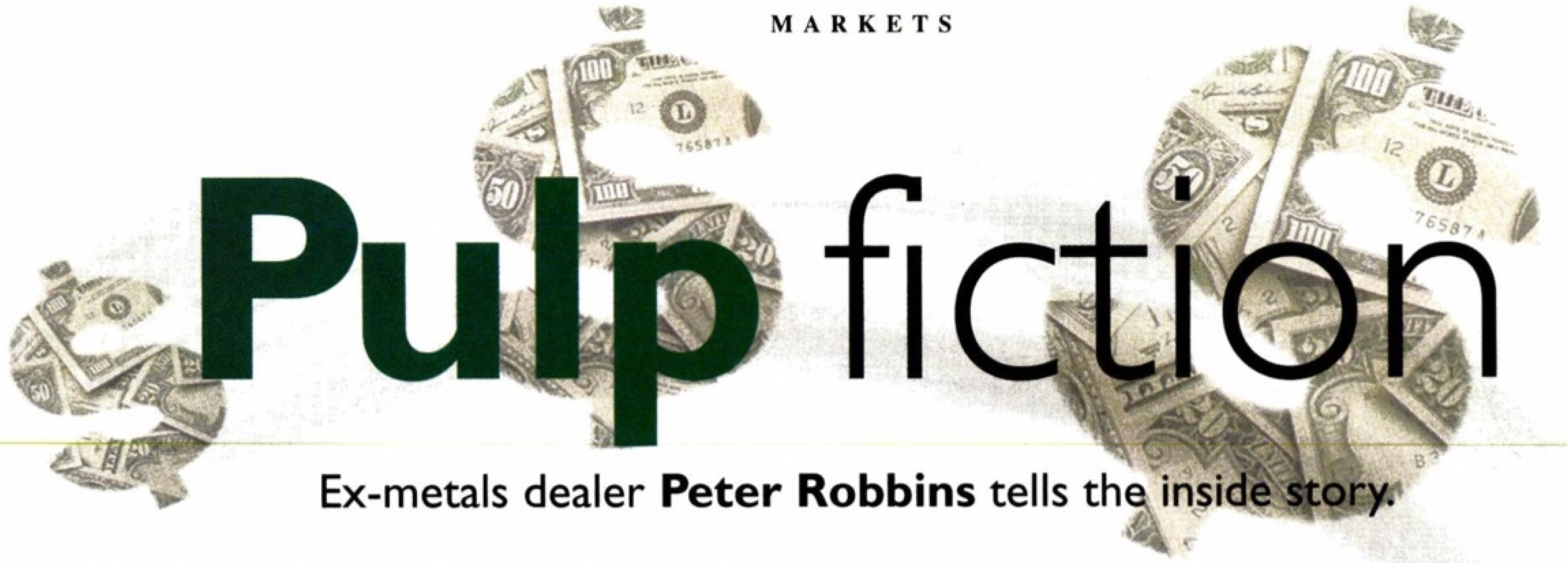
Word is spreading of similar land-rights struggles in other parts of the world where mining is found. Thousands of indigenous communities are under threat – an estimated one in five gold-exploration licences is on indigenous land.

Locals see the Wassa Fiase area as becoming Ghana's equivalent of Nigeria's Ogoniland, where the Shell Oil Company operates profitably while the local people are neglected in a foul environment. Despite international campaigns by the Ogoni people such as the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, Shell denies responsibility for the plight of Ogoniland. The company complains that it is the victim of the Nigerian Government's failure to distribute profits equitably from the oil industry to the people and that it is being asked to do the government's work. Are gold mining companies in the Wassa Fiase area being asked to do the work of the Government of Ghana? Or have the companies taken advantage of local lack of expertise and sophistication in negotiating resettlement contracts?

Aggrieved people complain that the Government of Ghana has not been sensitive to their plight or responsive to their appeals. They do not understand why crooked mining laws should turn them into slaves on the land of their birth. They blame the Government as well as foreign mining companies for reducing them to an endangered species.

The youth feel their anger building and are preparing to vent their frustration on the corporation. The chief of Teberebie, Nana Kwabena be Kojoshie II, endorses the call from young people for action: 'My people have been stretched too far and for too long. Just as a stretched elastic reaches its limit, we have reached our limit. We have to act now.' ■

Daniel Mensah Brande is a journalist and broadcaster who lives and works in Accra, Ghana.



Pulp fiction

Ex-metals dealer **Peter Robbins** tells the inside story.

Making $200,000 profit in a single day armed only with a telephone can give you quite a buzz. For 20 years I worked as an international metals dealer and gained something of a reputation as a speculator. Metals are regulated far less than other markets. With a bit of luck, a willingness to take a risk and a good understanding of how the market works, it's possible to make a lot of money.

Risk-taking is part and parcel of the industry. The buccaneering culture fits nicely with a free-market global economy. But now the free-trade economists have lost control of their own creation – they claimed the market would regulate the price of scarce metals by increasing their cost, reducing their demand and promoting efficient use. Instead the opposite is happening. More minerals are being extracted, but the cost of raw materials is decreasing. Taking inflation into account, the prices of most metals are about half of what they were 20 years ago.

When I first started in 1965 the industry was dominated by the giants established during the colonial era: Rio Tinto Zinc, Anglo-American, Union Minière and Hudson Bay Mining. These companies did not have large-scale manufacturing divisions and were dependent on profits from their mining operations. 'Gentlemen's agreements' existed to maintain the price of metals at levels that ensured a good return.

In the 1970s governments decided to gatecrash these 'gentlemen's' clubs. Countries introduced higher taxation, demanded shares in the mines and even nationalized them outright. Corporations were quick to realize that future profits would not come from the extraction process itself. One by one the gentlemen's agreements collapsed and prices tumbled.

Today many major mining operations are unprofitable – yet companies continue to extract minerals and metals in ever-increasing quantities. For instance, the Selebi-Pikwe nickel mine in Botswana, owned by the Government and a consortium of major mining companies, has been making a loss for over a decade.

Transnational companies can afford to carry on because most of them now manufacture products made with the metals and minerals from the mine. They benefit from cheap raw materials to make everything from window frames to jewellery. Meanwhile, poor countries have become dependent on mining but are getting less money for the minerals they produce. And the constant pressure to make a quick buck through selling natural resources has been heightened by the Majority World's increased debt to international banks.

Over the last ten years I have acted as an advisor to governments in their unequal struggle to understand the secretive and all too often dubious corporate activities. In 1990 I was asked to look into allegations made against Alusuisse, the Swiss mining and manufacturing conglomerate, concerning their operations in Sierra Leone.

In theory, control of national mineral wealth in Sierra Leone is in the hands of the Ministry of Mines. The Ministry occupies the fifth floor of a shabby tower block in the centre of Freetown, the country's capital and the setting for *The Heart of the Matter*, a torrid novel about betrayal by Graham Greene. The lifts have long ceased to operate and office workers have to scramble up and down the crumbling staircase, sweating in the Turkish-bath climate. The Ministry has no fax machines, no photocopiers and no computers. The electricity supply and telephone lines work only intermittently. Listless clerks sit on broken furniture leafing through sheaves of dirty, dog-eared forms.

Not surprisingly, the Government found it impossible to negotiate on equal terms with a company whose annual turnover is 30 times larger than the total value of the country's exports. Alusuisse spent more on its senior managers' recreation club at the mine than the country spent on its largest hospital.

The Government had been convinced by the company that the mines were barely profitable. It agreed to take a small annual fee rather than tax Alusuisse's profits. It was not told that Sierre Leone's bauxite was being sold to the Alusuisse's parent company in Zurich at about $18 per tonne while other countries were getting up to $30. Since Sierra Leone produced 1.5 million tonnes of bauxite each year, the difference in price added up to a sum roughly equivalent to their entire foreign exchange deficit.

During our many sessions of negotiations, Alusuisse's executives explained that they would be breaking Switzerland's penal code if they revealed the price at which they sold the bauxite to their customers. If the Government insisted on receiving a larger share of the profits, the company might have to consider pulling out of Sierra Leone altogether since the best and most accessible ore had already been mined.

Alusuisse wove its own tale of betrayal in Freetown. But the storyline is so common it reads like formulaic pulp fiction – Third World governments everywhere find their expectations of a tax bonanza swiftly

KAYTE BRIMACOMBE / NETWORK

evaporate as mining companies transfer profits out of the country and mineral prices internationally remain very low.

Much of the ravaging of resources is driven by the action of market players. Mines around the world strive to produce as cheaply as they can. Brokers search to get the best deals for their corporate clients. In the meantime, the price fluctuates constantly. Speculators then gamble on what producers and consumers are likely to do and how this will influence the cost of metals. Increasingly, buyers and producers find rampant speculation leaves their fate in the hands of these traders.

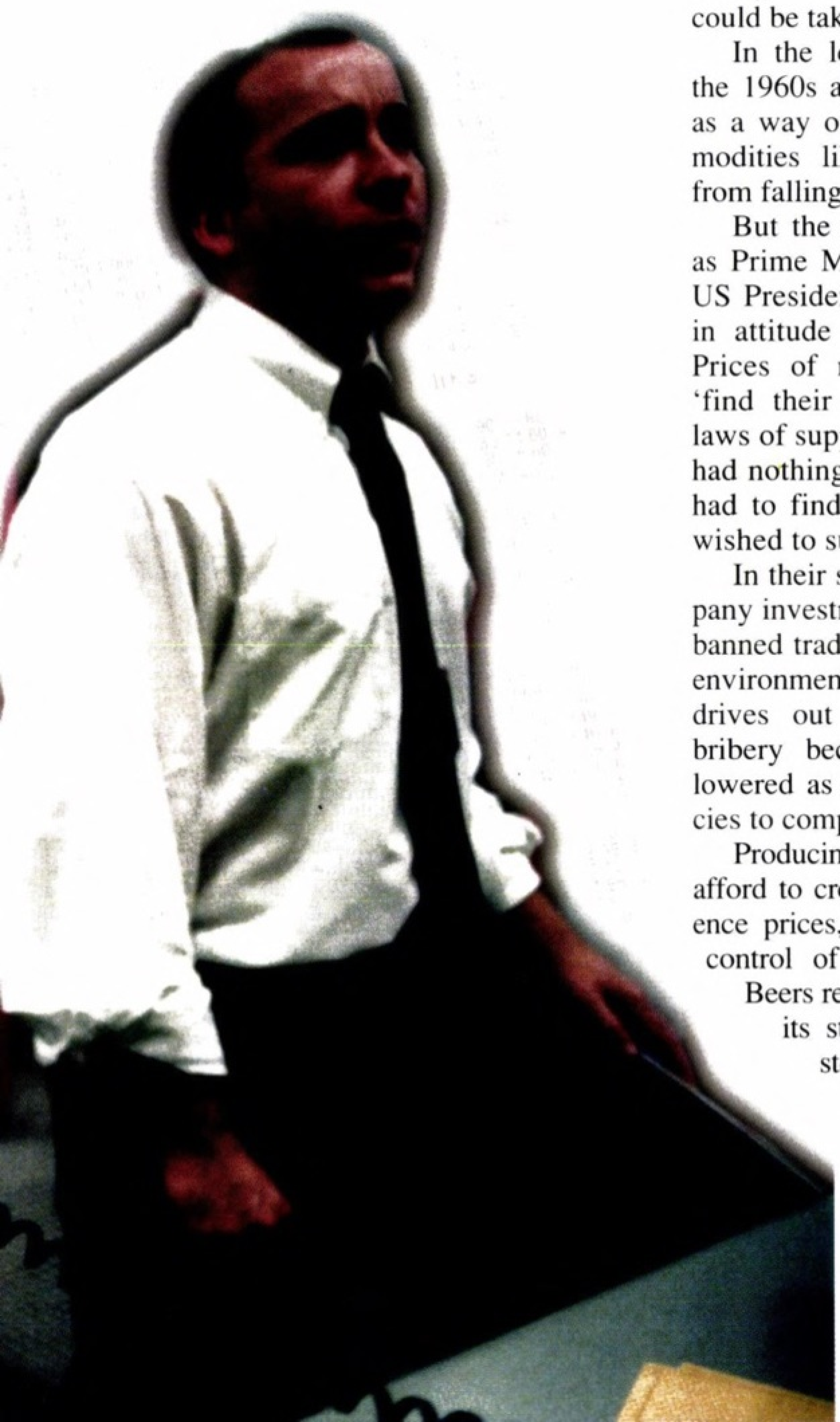
Brokers, who themselves buy and sell stock, conduct the business on the London Metal Exchange (LME) and the two massive New York commodity exchanges. They are keen to attract business from rich individuals and financial institutions who use the markets as just another way of making profits, just as anyone might bet on a horse race. The annual turnover of the LME in copper is 20 million tonnes – about twice the world's total copper output. Most trade on the metals markets has very little to do with actual buying and selling of minerals but much more to do with gambling on changes in their price.

Buying stock makes the price go up and selling causes it to fall. So if a player finds out that large quantities of a certain metal are going to be bought on a certain date, he or she can surreptitiously purchase available stocks. This could cause the price of available metal to rise hundreds of dollars a tonne on that particular day. The player then sells their stocks at the inflated price, making a fortune, but causing the price of stock to fall again. This practice, known as 'squeezing a date' is a regular phenomenon despite the adverse publicity for the market it causes – in 1997 alone there was evidence of squeezing dates on zinc, copper and aluminium.

The beleaguered Chair of the LME, Raj Bagri, admitted that there was 'an unhealthy increase in market aberrations' but since the LME itself cannot prove who is behind this manipulation, he does not appear to be able to do much about it.

Today many major mining operations are unprofitable – yet companies continue to extract minerals and metals in ever-increasing quantities

Nor is there any sign of the major industrial nations taking the international action necessary to curb this sale of Majority World resources. Indeed, rich countries have benefited enormously from low-priced imports. But, even if they had a change of heart, what realistic measures could be taken?



In the less-harsh economic climate of the 1960s and 1970s stockpiling was seen as a way of preventing the price of commodities like coffee, cocoa and rubber from falling too far.

But the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister and Ronald Reagan as US President heralded a complete change in attitude towards commodity markets. Prices of metals, they decreed, had to 'find their own level' according to the laws of supply and demand. Countries that had nothing but minerals to export simply had to find ways of cutting costs if they wished to survive.

In their scramble to attract mining-company investment, many poor countries have banned trade union activity and abandoned environmental protection. As bad practice drives out the good, tax dodging and bribery become widespread. Wages are lowered as countries devalue their currencies to compete with their neighbours.

Producing countries, which could not afford to create stockpiles in order to influence prices, looked wistfully at De Beers' control of the supply of diamonds. De Beers relies on its own money to support its stockpiling operations. It is bolstered by long-standing intimate relationships with Western governments and financial institutions. At De Beers' office in London there is reportedly a whole room filled with diamonds from floor to ceiling, slowly losing their sparkle as the dust settles. It's a unique example of stockpiling and price control but such methods are unlikely to be implemented to limit over-production of any other minerals.

Government stockpiling is also out of fashion. During the Cold War stockpiles were kept but these have now been sold, contributing to the chronic over-supply. Since the early 1990s the US Defence Logistics Agency sold more cobalt than Zaire, the world's largest cobalt producer, can generate in a year.

Producing countries could do more to control companies. They could outlaw the marketing of minerals through secretive tax-havens. Bribery can be curbed – given enough political will. International aid budgets could be used to empower governments with knowledge of company dealings. Majority World authorities could then exercise some supervision and be more aware of their rights.

Another approach might be to bring in internationally enforceable laws to protect the environment and enshrine workers' rights. Popular pressure ensures that mining activity in industrialized countries is controlled. If these controls were adopted by every country the cost of mining would certainly increase and the price of metals would have to rise. Exporting countries would benefit from higher prices, mineworkers' wages and conditions would improve and higher prices would reduce demand. This in turn would preserve ore deposits and reduce environmental damage.

But any attempt to control the international mining industry or curb the use of commodity exchanges for gambling purposes is fiercely resisted. Transnational companies are accustomed to writing the rules to suit themselves. And governments these days rarely intervene to control private industries until it is too late to do anything.

People are lured by the market to 'get rich quick'. But their wealth is only bought at the price of environmental degradation and poverty for many millions of people of the Majority World. ■

Peter Robbins was a commodities trader who now acts as a consultant for the Commodity Market Information Service in London, Britain.

Green oasis: Marna has to walk two hours across Inco's land to her fields.

A bitter harvest

Kathy Robinson shows how women reap the consequences of a masculine industry.

In the hours just after dawn Marna sets out with a group of women and elderly men from Soroako in Sulawesi, Indonesia. They walk across their former rice fields – now a corporate golf course. After a two-hour trek they reach the only land available for crops. The rest has been claimed for mining development. On the way the 'man-haul' trucks pass them by as the young men are transported to the mine. None of Marna's family have been able to find jobs there – her father was considered 'too old' at 40. The younger women are left to do the bulk of the physical labour on the farms.

All over the world, mining is men's work. When the Canadian personnel manager of Inco's mine in Soroako was asked why the workforce was all male he looked surprised – to him this was unremarkable. 'It's government legislation,' he said. Indonesian labour legislation (inherited from the Dutch) prohibits the employment of women in mines. And even in countries where it is legal, workers often consider women in mines taboo or bad luck.

Mining is seen as so 'naturally' masculine that few people consider its effects on women

Mining is seen as so 'naturally' masculine that few people consider its effects on women. What they don't realize is that the low-cost labour of Third World men as miners is sustained and subsidized by unpaid female labour; in the household, on farms and at markets.

In Soroako, men once worked in an egalitarian fashion alongside their wives and other family members in the fields. But mining companies soon set up hierarchical self-contained settlements. The mineworkers at Soroako live in segregated housing according to their job at the mine and wear different uniforms and helmets to signify their company status. The women also have set roles now – mostly as company wives or mining-town prostitutes.

The influx of expatriates heightens indigenous women's awareness of class – they are astounded by the wealth of the managers' wives and families. In the case of the remote Freeport mine in West Papua, the company regularly flies the wives of management to Queensland. They return from their weekend of shopping draped in new clothes and jewellery.

The managers' wives in the mining town of Soroako are expected to take on a leadership and welfare role in the community through involvement in the Association of Inco Families, an organization in which their position parallels that of their husband in the workforce. They give out packages of goods on the birth of babies and run adult literacy classes for the wives of labourers. Local women value many of these 'welfare' benefits; improved medical services in particular mean their babies are less likely to die.

But the colonial attitudes of the company also change social roles. Many incoming men are single and have high incomes. Bars and brothels are as inevitable in the company towns and squatter settlements throughout Asia and the Pacific as they are around military bases.

Companies actively encourage prostitution around the mining towns and at popular destinations for the miners' holidays. While in Soroako, I attended a publicity night for an airline at the company-built club. It was billed as a film screening but after showing us a short advertising film, the presenter became embarrassed. He explained to the audience of men, women and children that his presentation was aimed at mining and timber camps in Indonesia. The reason for his embarrassment became clear as the images lit up on the screen. We were presented with scenes of the 'sex capitals' of Asia – streets of bars, strip and sex shows. The people in the

KATHY ROBINSON

images were primarily white men partnered by beautiful young Asian women. The voice-over had messages such as 'Come to Perth for a change and a rest... and you'll come back for the rest' accompanying images of a topless Aussie girl (the only non-Asian woman) sunbaking on a Perth beach. The message worked on sexual innuendo and the image of male sexuality needing immediate and frequent gratification. Migrant workers expect sexual services to be available near where they live.

Another role for local women in Indonesian mining towns is the 'contract wife'. The contract wife's marriage ends when the worker disappears after his contract is up (often to a wife back home). Women working as prostitutes or contract wives are usually immigrants and often especially vulnerable as they lack protection from family members. Many marry in good faith, ignorant of any other wives, and assume a life-long commitment. For others, there is often a hope or fantasy that the 'contract' will lead to a permanent arrangement, a 'way out' of poverty (and it happens with enough regularity for the fantasy to be fed). There were also a few women in Soroako where the departing contract 'husband' did not take the wife with him, but did continue to remit money to support their children. But mostly the costs of this are paid by the communities where the women come from. It is the women themselves who have to deal with the economic strain of raising children without paternal support.

For many local people mining development is changing attitudes towards sexuality as well as towards women. While many societies in Papua New Guinea incorporated long periods of male sexual abstinence, there is evidence that in mining towns this is being eroded. Communities report a growing incidence of alcoholism, rape and other forms of violence against women and an increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy.

Mining has excluded women from the principal benefits of pay and employment despite the fact that many of the downsides to mining development are specific to women. The 'factory girl' has come to stand as the image of the modern South East Asian woman who is a victim of 'tiger' economics. But the scratch of the tiger's claw is also felt by the prostitute stalking the miners' barracks, the girl stooped from carrying rice who steals a glance at a passing BMW and the isolated domestic wife pacing her room in the company town. ■

Kathy Robinson is an anthropologist at the Australian National University in Canberra. She has written other works on mining: a paper published in *Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples* and *Stepchildren of Progress: the Political Economy of Development in an Indonesian Mining Town*.

Just another mouthy union woman

Linda Raisovich-Parsons, 39, a miner from West Virginia, was among the first of her generation to go into the mines and the first female mine-safety inspector in the US. She spoke to **NI** at her office in Washington DC.

'I first went into the mines in August 1976. I was 18 years old and had just finished high school. There was not a whole lot of career opportunities for a girl back then in West Virginia! My father was a coal miner. He had multiple sclerosis and I didn't want to burden him with the expense of a college education.

We'd had an oil embargo since the early 1970s; coal was booming and companies were hiring. The wages were $50 to $60 a day, which was good money at that time.

So I went to work with my dad. Initially, he didn't like the idea because he didn't want his daughter working in that kind of environment. But when he saw that I was not just testing the waters and was determined to make a go of it, he taught me the ropes and looked out for his baby daughter. Working side by side, we developed a close bond and we used to talk about problems in the mine. I think he thought it was neat to have someone else in the family, besides his brothers, to talk with about his occupation.

BHARATI SADASIVAM

There was a lot of heavy lifting and carrying to do and that was what I found the most difficult. Most of the men took the position that well, if you're here, you've got to pull your weight and I was determined that no one was going to prove I wasn't able to do the job.

By the 1980s, women had got a foothold in the mining industry: there were over 3,000 women working at one point. They took a look at the union [United Mine Workers of America] and said, "Hey, where are we represented there? You've got all these white male faces." They knew I was really active in the local union in my area and offered me the job of safety inspector. At first I declined because I didn't feel that men would accept a woman in a leadership position. But they said they would train me and besides, our company was starting some lay-offs and I thought I was likely to get laid off if I stayed.

So I became a safety inspector and lived in a little town called Jenkinjones. I covered three counties for the union. I knew I was blazing a trail as the first woman safety inspector – the press kept calling because I was a novelty! There were some safety committees that simply couldn't accept a woman in that role and would bypass me and go to my male co-workers. And I often got the same reactions from the coal companies. But there were others that were more accepting of me. I found the older miners more helpful and respectful than the younger ones. Sexual harassment was a problem initially but we've grown with these men in the 20 years we've worked with them and I think we're just one of the crew now.

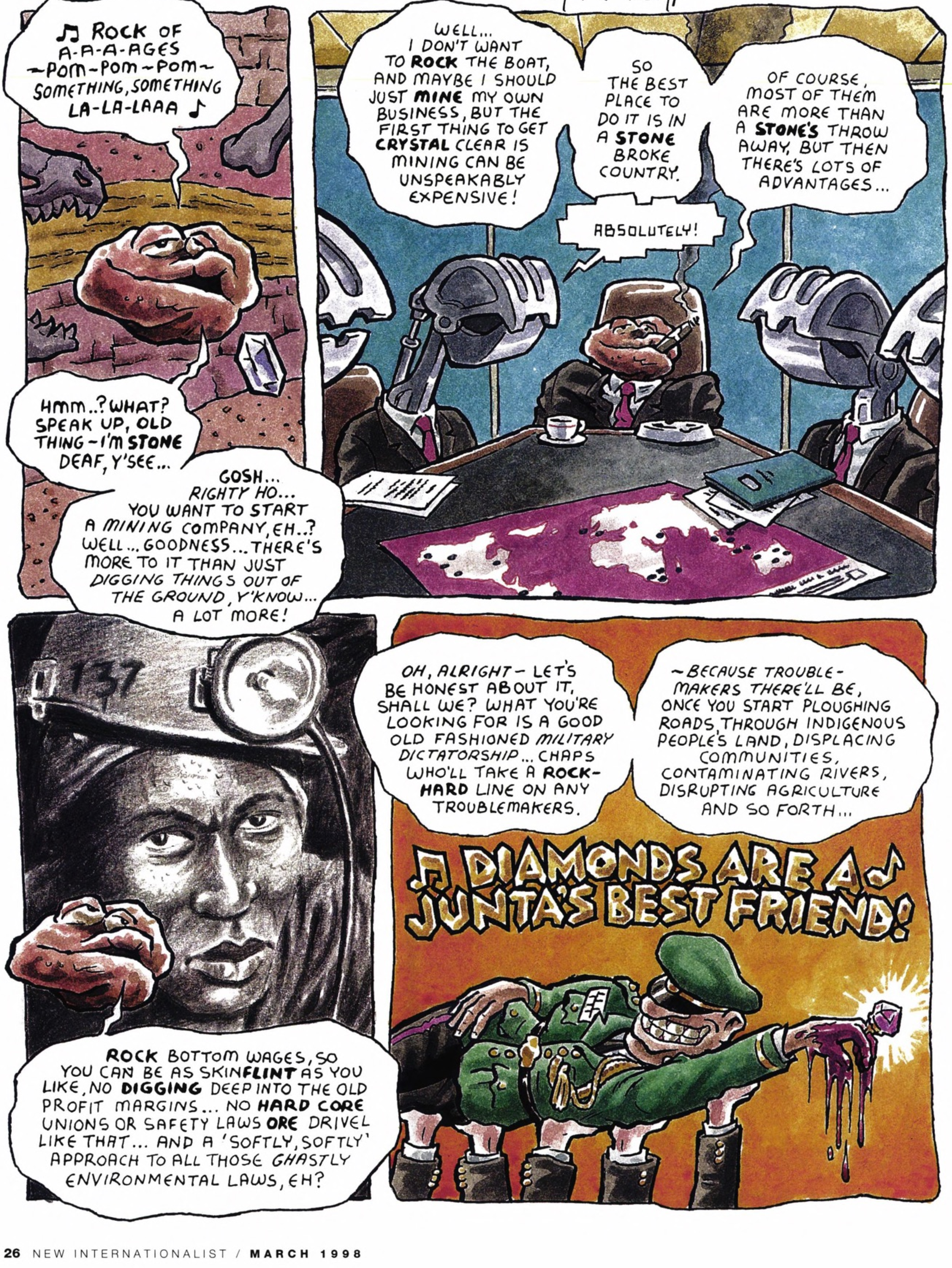
I found women on the whole more safety-conscious than men, they took all precautions; made sure that all the equipment was working properly. You find a very low accident rate among women. Since women were first hired in 1973, seven women have been killed in mine accidents. Two of those were in major mine disasters, in Utah and Virginia.

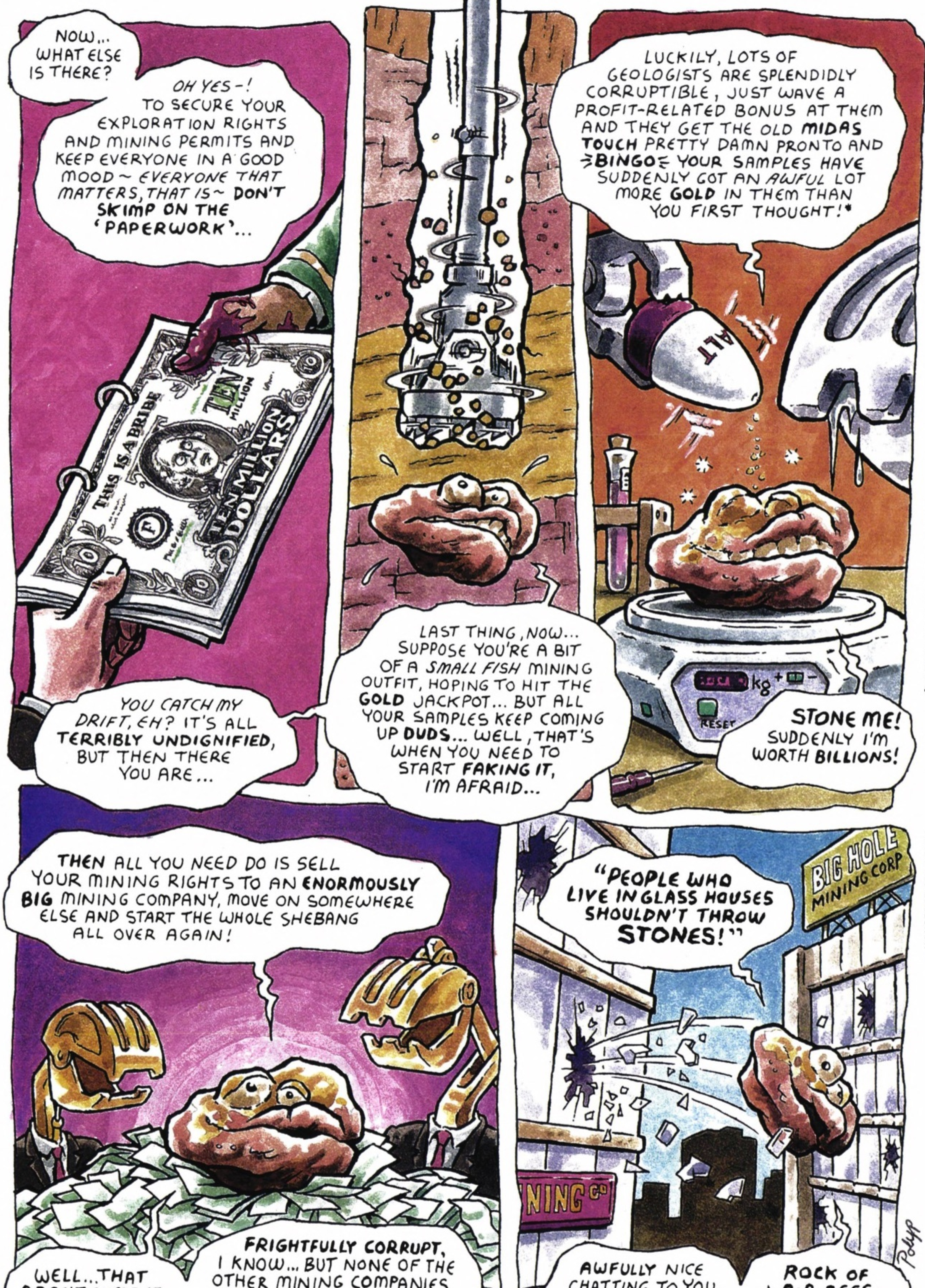
When my Scottish husband told his family he was marrying a miner, his family thought he was gay because there are no women miners in Britain! For 17 years I've been the only woman hired by the union. I'm comfortable here, but there are times when I've felt like a token woman. But the few women that are there are very outspoken, the type of people who get out and get involved because they've had to be fighters and scrappers to get the job. I have a button from a women miners' conference that says "Just Another Mouthy Union Woman."'

Interview by **Bharati Sadasivam.**

MINE ALL MINE...

by PJ Polyp


♫ ROCK OF A-A-A-AGES ~POM-POM~POM~ SOMETHING, SOMETHING LA-LA-LAAA ♪
HMM..? WHAT? SPEAK UP, OLD THING - I'M STONE DEAF, Y'SEE...
GOSH... RIGHTY HO... YOU WANT TO START A MINING COMPANY, EH..? WELL... GOODNESS... THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN JUST DIGGING THINGS OUT OF THE GROUND, Y'KNOW... A LOT MORE!
WELL... I DON'T WANT TO ROCK THE BOAT, AND MAYBE I SHOULD JUST MINE MY OWN BUSINESS, BUT THE FIRST THING TO GET CRYSTAL CLEAR IS MINING CAN BE UNSPEAKABLY EXPENSIVE!
SO THE BEST PLACE TO DO IT IS IN A STONE BROKE COUNTRY.
ABSOLUTELY!
OF COURSE, MOST OF THEM ARE MORE THAN A STONE'S THROW AWAY, BUT THEN THERE'S LOTS OF ADVANTAGES...
137
ROCK BOTTOM WAGES, SO YOU CAN BE AS SKINFLINT AS YOU LIKE, NO DIGGING DEEP INTO THE OLD PROFIT MARGINS... NO HARD CORE UNIONS OR SAFETY LAWS ORE DRIVEL LIKE THAT... AND A 'SOFTLY, SOFTLY' APPROACH TO ALL THOSE GHASTLY ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, EH?
OH, ALRIGHT - LET'S BE HONEST ABOUT IT, SHALL WE? WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS A GOOD OLD FASHIONED MILITARY DICTATORSHIP... CHAPS WHO'LL TAKE A ROCK-HARD LINE ON ANY TROUBLEMAKERS.
~BECAUSE TROUBLE-MAKERS THERE'LL BE, ONCE YOU START PLOUGHING ROADS THROUGH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S LAND, DISPLACING COMMUNITIES, CONTAMINATING RIVERS, DISRUPTING AGRICULTURE AND SO FORTH...
♫ DIAMONDS ARE A JUNTA'S BEST FRIEND! ♪


NOW... WHAT ELSE IS THERE?
OH YES -! TO SECURE YOUR EXPLORATION RIGHTS AND MINING PERMITS AND KEEP EVERYONE IN A GOOD MOOD ~ EVERYONE THAT MATTERS, THAT IS ~ DON'T SKIMP ON THE 'PAPERWORK'...
THIS IS A BRIBE
TEN MILLION
TEN MILLION DOLLARS
TEN MILLION DOLLARS
YOU CATCH MY DRIFT, EH? IT'S ALL TERRIBLY UNDIGNIFIED, BUT THEN THERE YOU ARE...
LAST THING, NOW... SUPPOSE YOU'RE A BIT OF A SMALL FISH MINING OUTFIT, HOPING TO HIT THE GOLD JACKPOT... BUT ALL YOUR SAMPLES KEEP COMING UP DUDS... WELL, THAT'S WHEN YOU NEED TO START FAKING IT, I'M AFRAID...
LUCKILY, LOTS OF GEOLOGISTS ARE SPLENDIDLY CORRUPTIBLE, JUST WAVE A PROFIT-RELATED BONUS AT THEM AND THEY GET THE OLD MIDAS TOUCH PRETTY DAMN PRONTO AND ≡BINGO≡ YOUR SAMPLES HAVE SUDDENLY GOT AN AWFUL LOT MORE GOLD IN THEM THAN YOU FIRST THOUGHT!*
ALT
kg
RESET
STONE ME! SUDDENLY I'M WORTH BILLIONS!
THEN ALL YOU NEED DO IS SELL YOUR MINING RIGHTS TO AN ENORMOUSLY BIG MINING COMPANY, MOVE ON SOMEWHERE ELSE AND START THE WHOLE SHEBANG ALL OVER AGAIN!
WELL... THAT ABOUT SUMS IT ALL UP, REALLY...
FRIGHTFULLY CORRUPT, I KNOW... BUT NONE OF THE OTHER MINING COMPANIES COMPLAIN BECAUSE YOU SEE THEY ALL KNOW:
BIG HOLE MINING CORP
"PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASS HOUSES SHOULDN'T THROW STONES!"
NING Co
AWFULLY NICE CHATTING TO YOU, OLD THING... TRA FOR NOW!
♪ ROCK OF A-A-AGES, DA-DA-DAA... ♫
Polyp

* GEOLOGISTS REALLY DO FAKE SAMPLES BY ADDING GOLD TO THEM.

ILLUSTRATION: POLYP

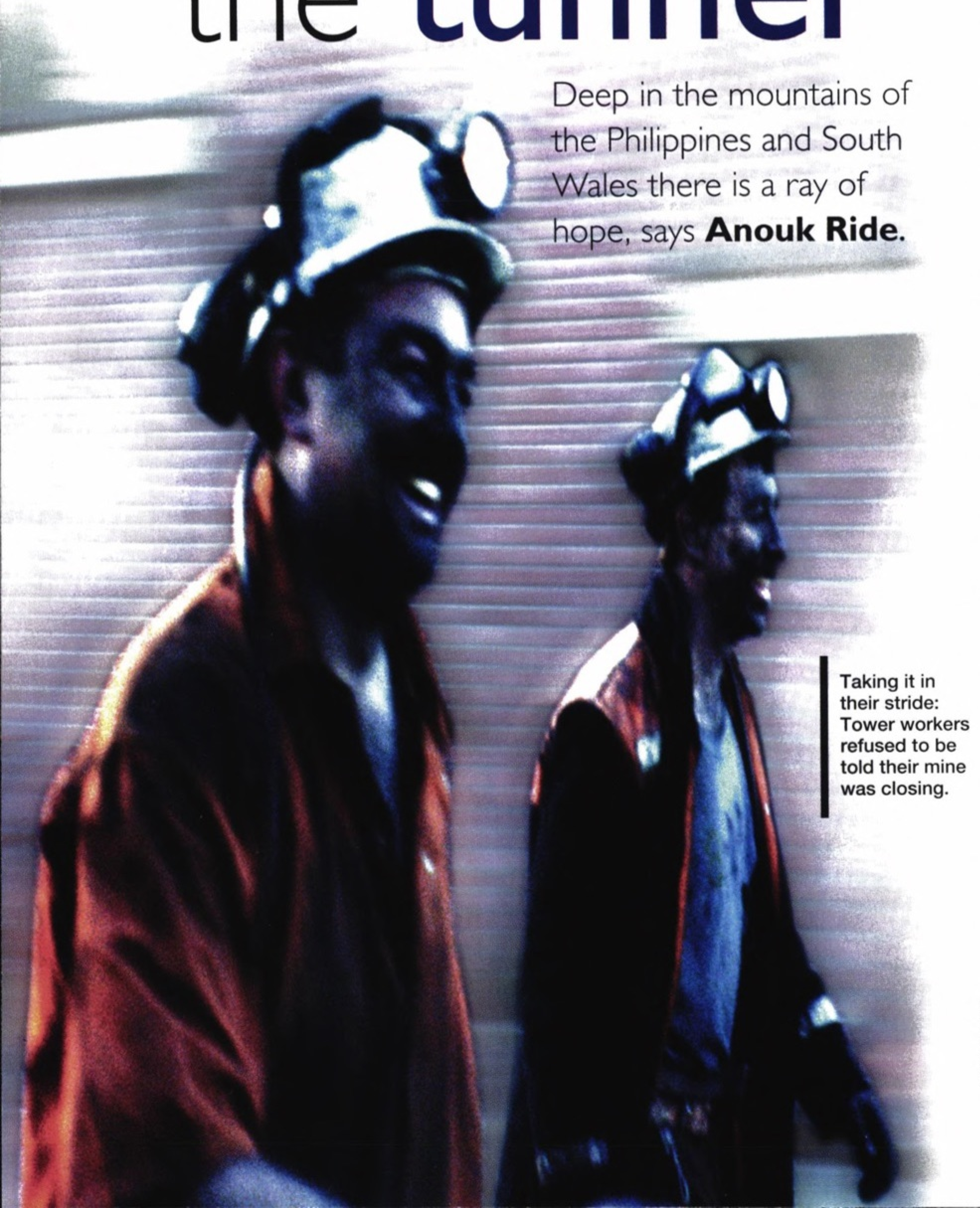
The **Light** at the end of the **tunnel**

Deep in the mountains of the Philippines and South Wales there is a ray of hope, says **Anouk Ride**.

IT is not yet light when the miners arrive. They joke about the near-misses as their cars skid on the ice that lines the road to the colliery. It's so cold they can see their breath and in their orange overalls, with their lamps on their helmets they look like dragons in the mist. Today at the Tower colliery in South Wales they will cut 1,500 tons of coal.

Meanwhile in the Philippines, it is mid-afternoon as the indigenous men emerge with their trolleys of ore from tunnels in the mountains of the Cordillera region. The miners are greeted by their families, the sun on their faces and the sounds of their oxen in the terraced vegetable fields.

It may seem that these miners from opposite ends of the earth are as different as moon and sun. But while humankind increasingly orbits around large-scale mining, the Igorot (the Cordillera's indigenous people) and the workers at Tower have broken out of the boom-bust cycle of the mining giants. Each community has wrestled back control of its own destiny.



Taking it in their stride: Tower workers refused to be told their mine was closing.

ANOUK RIDE

The early missionaries prayed the lust for gold would drive Spanish adventurers into the Cordillera to pacify the natives and promote conversion. Today the region is home to a million tribal people and is the largest remaining stronghold of indigenous culture in the country.

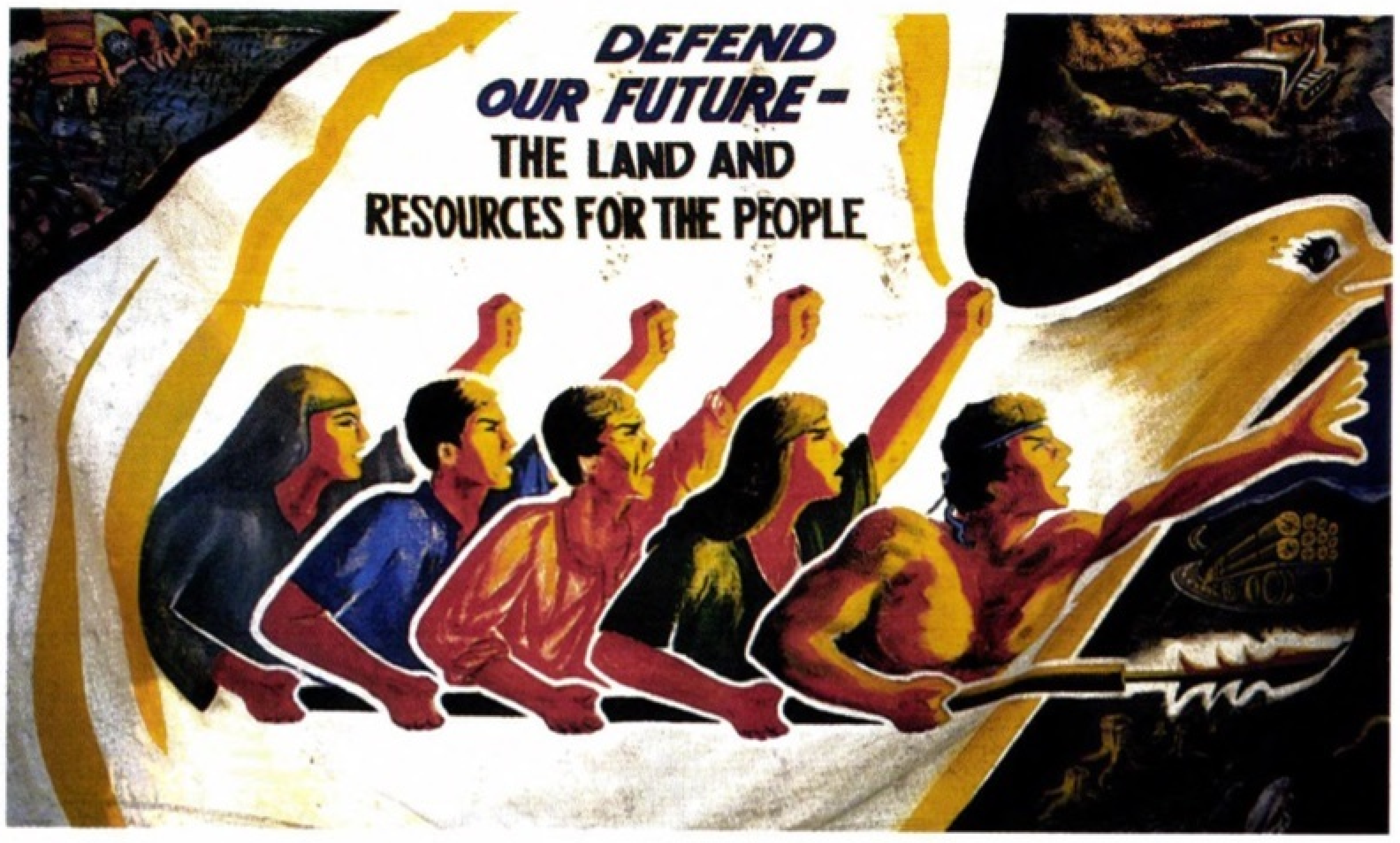
But golden greed still threatens to devastate large parts of the Philippines – two-thirds of the Cordillera mountains, the home of the Igorot, is now leased to foreign companies. With religious zeal the London's *Financial Times* in the late 1980s enthused: 'The Philippines is far more densely mineralized than Australia, the tonnages are bigger and the terrain is largely unexplored. The place is wide open.' National and local governments became infected with rampant economic liberalization programs spread by the United Nations Development Program, the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In 1995 the Philippines Mining Code was enacted. Lauded as one of the most favourable to foreign mining companies anywhere in the world, it includes provisions for 100-per-cent foreign ownership, repatriation of all profits overseas and mining concessions of up to 81,000 hectares.

Authorities encourage large pit-mines, pointing to the employment they create. In the 1970s around 6,000 people were employed at the Cordillera's biggest open-pit mine. But workers were paid low wages, lived mostly in overcrowded bunkhouses and were subjected to daily body searches and internal scans. The thousands of jobs did not last long. Today fewer than 600 people are employed at the mine. Even this number is tipped to fall further as the Benguet corporation, Asia's largest mining company, plans to mine out the reserves in less than a decade.

LAND AND RESOURCES

A vast valley stripped of vegetation and filled with pollutants will be left behind. Jill Carino of the Women Workers' Program in Baguio City says: 'The mining operations have caused serious pollution of the river system from Itogon down to the sea. Women are unable to fish, do gold panning, wash or bathe in the river.'

Britain too was once awash with deep-pit coal mines. Miners here have a history of resistance but the Government of Margaret Thatcher proved to be their most implacable opponent, pursuing an unrelenting liberalization program. Ken, a worker at Tower colliery says: 'When I started there were 40 pits in South Wales, so there was a job for life. Everybody thought they'd never close.' Since 1985, 140 deep-pits have been sold and 90 per cent of the


DEFEND OUR FUTURE – THE LAND AND RESOURCES FOR THE PEOPLE

DAVE RICHARDS / RISC

workforce made redundant. Whole towns built around mining projects have been left without a livelihood.

Since then, private companies have moved in and set up large open-cast mines instead. Open-cast mining companies – which strip the surface of the land then move on to do the same elsewhere – are increasing the number of mine sites across the land.

'It is like a bereavement when you see a familiar landscape destroyed,' says Eric Evans from the pressure group Wales Against Opencast. Nothing grows on old open-cast mine sites, called 'voids'. Often companies fill their voids with waste. They actually earn £10 ($16) per cubic metre of waste dumped – more for toxic waste – and a typical void might represent 20 million cubic metres of empty space. A layer of plastic provides the only protection from seepage into the soil and underground water.

These ravenous companies claim to provide jobs to communities starved of employment following the pit closures. But open-cast mine workforces, unlike deep-pit miners, are mobile rather than drawn from local residents. And while an open-cast mine may offer employment for six to ten years, a deep-pit one employs miners for an average of thirty.

In March 1994, British Coal executives said Tower colliery would be closed because there was no market for coal. The workers did not believe them. Ken says sarcastically: 'It's pretty obvious now that British coal weren't interested in marketing coal in any real way. We had a *wonderful* marketing team on *very high salaries* but I don't believe they were *selling anything*.'

'They kept telling us the mountains had been sold and we had no right to oppose,' said a woman from the community of Mainit in the Cordillera, where resistance was equally strong. The Philippines Government had agreed to Benguet Corporation's mining development plans. The women described how they stopped them: 'We women got together and followed the survey team...We thought of having teams of five women and each of them tackling one of the surveyors... Seeing our determination to keep fighting the survey team finally left. We destroyed their walkie-talkies and burned down their camp houses.'

A barricade was later set up to prevent Benguet from entering the area. Communities used all the resources they had to thwart the company's ambitions. An elderly woman recalls: 'Company personnel tried to blast our position with dynamite but the old women on picket duty took off all their clothes, exposed themselves and chased the company men to shame them.' Protesters were harassed and imprisoned but pickets are still preventing Benguet Corporation from opening some sites.

The struggle at Tower also continued for many years. 'We'd been fighting this closure for 20 bloody years so I had to learn about my coal mine because I had to defend it for so long,' says Tower chair Tyrone O'Sullivan. The miners knew that they could keep the coal mine going and elected five officials who became the Tower Employee Buyout Team. All the banks insisted that three of the five board members must have senior management experience before any loans could be guaranteed. 'In our rules and articles we put in that as soon as that loan was paid off the workforce could elect who they want to the board,' said Ken, who is now a director. Eventually around seven of the management team were brought back, plus lawyers and finance experts. Apprentices and young men have also been employed. 'That's the exciting part about this company – seeing young faces. Everyone has a quickness in their step now they know they're expected to train people again,' says Tyrone. The company has now been running for three years, and made around £20 million ($32 million) in the last financial year.

FOR THE PEOPLE

'They do not work the mines steadily but only when forced by necessity... they do not even try to become wealthy,' wrote a Spanish conquistador in 1566 when describing the Igorot. This has not changed – gold is regarded as common property as all members of the community are involved in its production. It is not uncommon to see a line of people outside the tunnel, waiting to ask for gold ore as the men emerge. The laborious processing of the gold involves women, the elderly and children.

A young man explains his preference for Igorot mining: 'We small-scale miners have a better life than those who work for the company. We can take a rest day when we like. We have our gardens so that we don't pay for our food.' On average small-scale miners earn three times as much as company employees.

All employees at Tower have equal shares in the company and the same number of holidays, unlike under British Coal. In the hum of the canteen the miners reflect on the changes since Tower was bought by its workers.

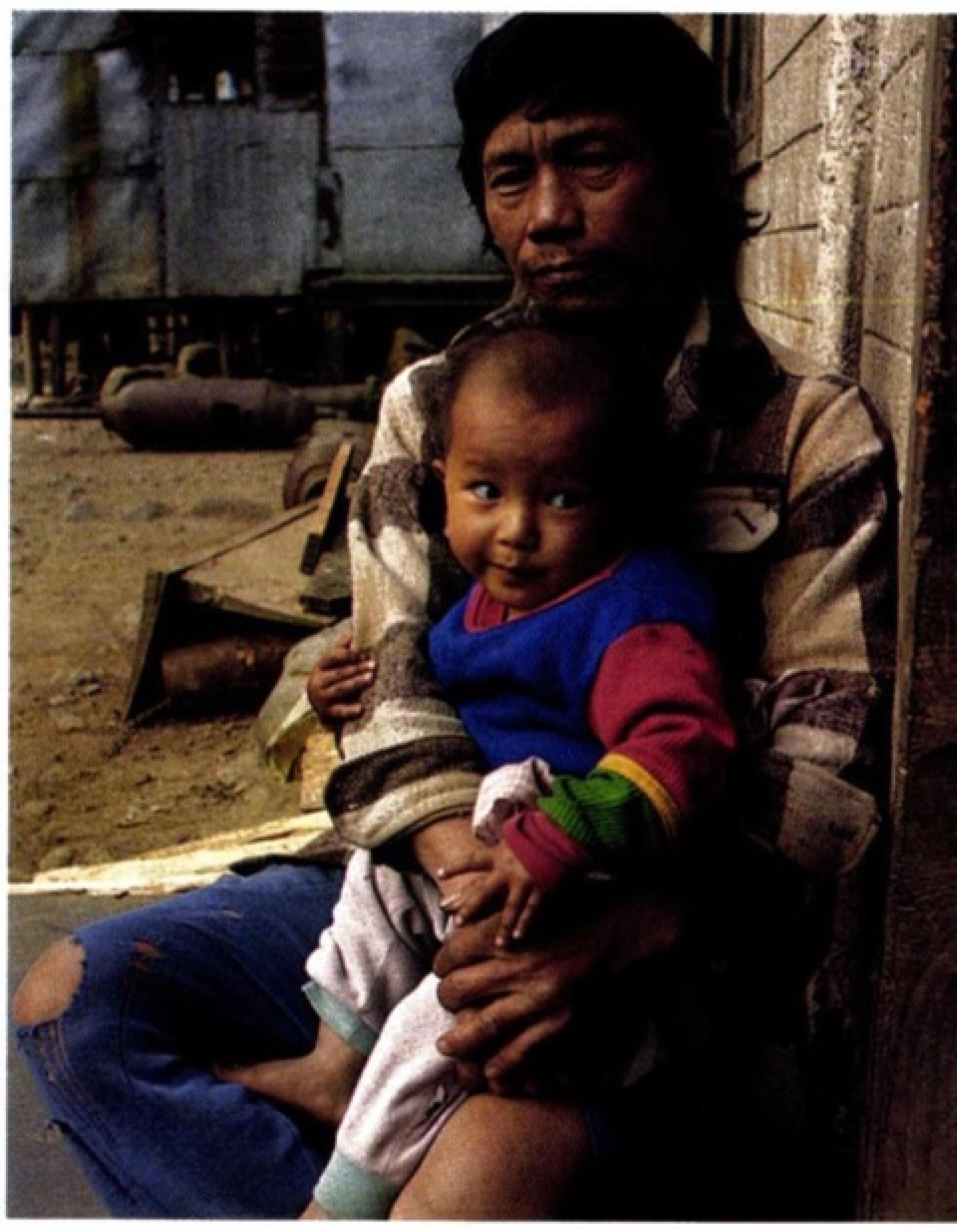
'With British Coal it took a couple of days to actually get in to see the manager. And there was them and there was us. That's still there to a certain extent but now there's...' Alan pauses and searches for the right word.

His mate butts in to fill in the blank: 'More diplomacy and less confrontation.' This analysis brings cat-calls and laughter. But the words are appreciated. 'As far as possible no-one's in the dark,' Ken says. Management reports officially to the miners and when the light is on in their offices, the door is open.

'We get together as shareholders four times a year and argue. And some of our meetings are quite... I wouldn't say nasty but they're quite loud and noisy and we argue the points,' explains Tyrone. Every few years miners appraise the performance of the board members and vote on whether they should be retained as directors. Tyrone admits these meetings can be nerve-racking: 'Yeah, democracy is sometimes a pain in the backside. But at the end of the day its got a lot of benefits going for it.'

The benefits are not only for the

A sign of protest in the Cordillera (above). Golden tradition – Igorot teach their children to respect the land that they mine (below).



DAVE RICHARDS / RISC

workers. Since the buyout, the company has started restoring some land. 'We've got 14 dragonflies there already, different species. They tell me that if we get 15 we'll have a special nature reserve,' he says. They also aim to limit air pollution, particularly the methane that coal mining always produced. 'Up till now we've just blown it up into the sky. We've decided, as a company, to capture this gas and turn it into a generator, to generate electricity so you won't have this problem of methane going straight up into the atmosphere.'

In the Cordillera, the effects on the environment are minimal. Indigenous miner Dalinco describes the process: 'First we find a suitable place where high-grade ore might be found. A group of five to eight people band together to excavate the ore. A team works for three months gathering it in sacks. The fourth month is spent grinding the rock in a simple ball mill and then separating the gold. This is done using washing and gravity separation. We use no chemicals. When this is finished the left-over tailings are still rich in gold. There is also gold in the soil round the site. This can be reworked. Community members are given the tailings to process again.' Anthropologists state this environmentally-sustainable tradition of gold mining is hundreds of years old.

DEFEND OUR FUTURE

The Igorot hold out hope that the mining giants will spare the mountains that are their heaven on earth. In late 1996 the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) was passed. Since then there has been much confusion over what the Act means and a commission established to recommend how to solve the problem. But everyone believes nothing will be done about land-rights issues until after the elections in May this year.

Tower's future is constantly under debate: 'An older person may say, "Right, let's work the pit for another five to ten years then sell it and I can retire with all this money." And a younger person will say, "No, let's work the pit for 20 to 30 years and then sell it." Both of these people are doing what's best for their families, not the company,' says Tyrone. 'I want to create another 400 jobs and then I think the Tower story will start to mean something. If it's going to be a never-ending story, owned by the workforce, we must put some money aside for the next generation.'

The news of these alternatives is spreading. Tower has received visitors from every conceivable country on earth and indigenous people from the Cordillera have visited Britain. Mick Appleyard, Welsh campaigner and former miner, was one of the hosts. He says that the same dark cloud hangs over the future of the mining communities in both countries: 'Profit before people every time.' The miners at Tower and the Igorot people believe that this should be reversed. Mining is not an either/or choice – the question is how to do it. These two communities have shown that there are alternatives to digging yourself into a hole. By enshrining the principles of democracy and respect for the land, they have proved that there is light at the end of the tunnel. ■

Sources: *Costing the Earth*: Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC). All British interviews by **Anouk Ride**. Philippines interviews from Survival International, Cordillera Links and **Geoff Nettleton**.

ANCESTRAL LAND NOW

DAVE RICHARDS / RISC

ACTION

Take action *before* we are mined out of matter.

The following organizations relate to the keynote article:

AUSTRALIA

Australian Conservation Foundation Uranium Campaign/
Stop Jabiluka, 340 Gore Street,
Fitzroy,VIC 3065
Tel: +61 3 9416 1166
Fax: +61 3 9416 0767
e-mail: acfenv@peg.apc.org

Community Aid Abroad
156 George Street, Fitzroy,
VIC 3065
Tel: +61 3 9289 9444
Fax: +61 3 9419 5895
e-mail: enquire@caa.org.au

Friends of the Earth
312 Smith Street,
Collingwood, VIC 3066
Tel: +61 3 9419 8700
Fax: +61 3 9416 2081
e-mail: foe@foe.org.au

Mineral Policy Institute
PO Box 21, Bondi Junction,
NSW 2022
Tel: +61 2 9387 5540
Fax: +61 2 9386 1497
e-mail: mpi@mpi.hydra.org.au

One World Tours shows the impact of the Olympic Dam mine on the environment and indigenous people. PO Box 34,
Rundle Street, Adelaide,
SA 5000 Tel: +61 8 8232 2727
Fax: +61 8 8232 2808.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Coromandel Watchdog
35 Albert Street, Whitianga
Tel: +64 7 866 4077
Fax: +64 7 866 2900

Forest and Bird Protection Society
PO Box 2516,
Christchurch 8015
Tel: +64 3 366 6317
Fax: +64 3 366 0655

BRITAIN

Minewatch
54 Camberwell Road,
London, SE5 OEN
Tel: +44 171 277 4852
Fax: +44 171 277 4853
e-mail: minewatch@gn.apc.org

CANADA

Environmental Mining Council
1216 Broad Street, Victoria,
British Columbia V8W2A5
Tel: +1 250 384 2686
Fax: +1 250 384 2620
e-mail:
emcblca@mining.watch.org

Friends of the Earth
47 Clarence Street, Ottowa,
Ontario K1N9K1
Tel: +1 613 563 0815
e-mail: foe@intranet.ca

UNITED STATES

Materials Efficiency Project
2006 Klingle Road NW,
Washington DC 20010
Tel: +1 202 667 6535
Fax: +1 202 986 7183
e-mail:
youngje@mindspring.com

Project Underground
1847 Berkeley Way,
Berkeley CA 94703
Tel: +1 510 705 8981
Fax: +1 510 705 8983
e-mail:
project_underground@moles.org

Worldwatch
1776 Massachusetts Ave NW,
Washington DC 20036
Tel: +1 202 452 1999
Fax: +1 202 986 7183
e-mail:
worldwatch@worldwatch.org

By enshrining the principles of democracy and respect for the land, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

These organizations relate to specific campaigns:

Labour (see page 12):

FILOMENA
Almirante Guisse 1137,
Lima 11 Peru
Tel/Fax: +51 1472 0625

Land Rights:

AUSTRALIA

CAA Native Title Campaign
156 George Street,
Fitzroy, VIC 3065
Tel: +61 3 9289 9444
Fax: +61 3 9419 5895
e-mail: enquire@caa.org.au

PHILIPPINES

Cordillera Links
c/o 111 Faringdon Road,
Stanford in the Vale,
Oxfordshire SN7 8LD
Tel/Fax: +44 136 771 8889

BRITAIN

Survival International
11-15 Emerald Street,
London WC1N 3QL
Tel: +44 171 242 1441
Fax: +44 171 242 1771
e-mail: survival@gn.apc.org

Against opencast:

BRITAIN

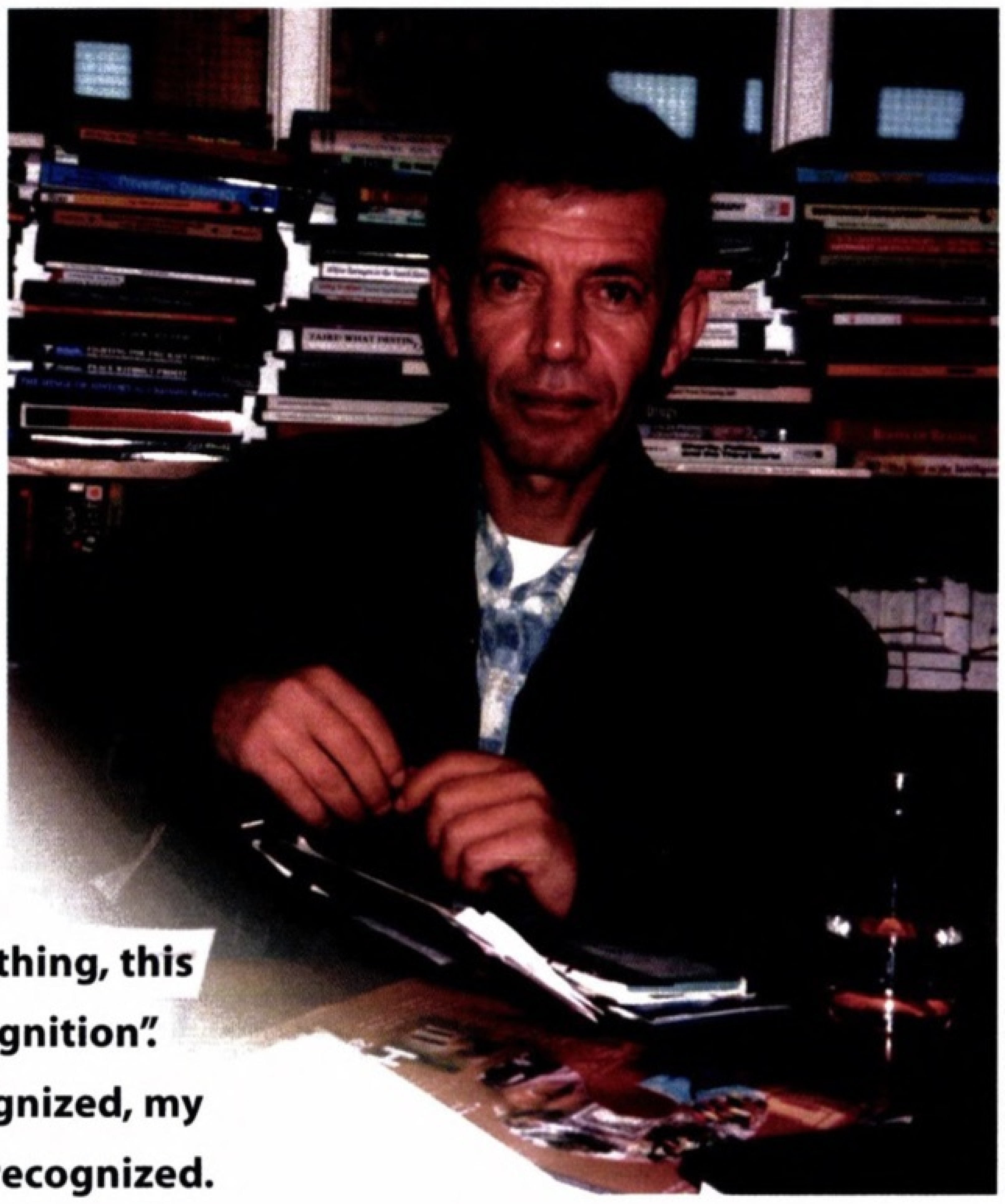
Friends of the Earth
26-28 Underwood Street,
London N17JQ
Tel: +44 171 490 1555
Fax: +44 171 490 0881
e-mail: info@foe.co.uk

Friends of the Earth Scotland
72 Newhaven Road,
Edinburgh EH65QG
Tel: +44 131 554 9977
Fax: +44 0131 554 8656
e-mail: foescotland@gn.apc.org

Scottish Opencast Action Group
42 Woolfords, Cobbinshaw,
By West Calder EH558LH
Tel: +44 1501 785 202.
e-mail:andy.meikle@virgin.net

Muhammed Abu El Haija

Nikki van der Gaag speaks to **Muhammed Abu El Haija**, Arab, Palestinian, Israeli; a man determined in his fight for equal citizenship.



NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

IT never ceases to amaze me when I meet people who remember dates and figures with absolute precision. It is usually because years and numbers are etched into their memories by pain. Muhammed Abu El Haija, huddled in his battered black leather jacket against the English winter, charts his story year by year. It mirrors the setting up of the State of Israel, exactly 50 years ago.

'My parents were moved from their village, Ain Hod, after 1948. There were 900 people in that village, but only my family remained, setting up a new village two kilometres away. The rest left, for Syria, for Jordan, all over the world...

'In 1964 the authorities fenced off our new village. The land they took was planted with olive trees. They planted taller trees between the olives which were supposed to kill them and deprive them of fruit. I remember this day very well. I was nine years old. The military came and said, "This area is for you and from here down is for the Government of Israel." My house was inside the fenced area.'

His hands, sweeping across the table, suggest the wilting olive trees on a wide expanse of mountain and the incomprehension of a small child. He shrugs. 'The olive trees are still there. They can't produce fruit now. They are frozen trees.'

'In 1971 they said that our area is now a National Park. We were not supposed to be there. But we continued to live from our goats and farm our land until 1975 when they made a law that goats are a danger to the trees.

'We had to sell our goats and look for work outside the village. So the young people went to Haifa to learn to become educated people.

'My grandfather believed that by getting an education his grandchildren would be able to get the things the village needed. Things like electricity, water, roads. He held a meeting in the village saying that now the children were going to be educated we would be able to get these things. We were very happy that day.'

Muhammed's face is lined beyond his years but he smiles at the memory; a smile that somehow gives me a picture of his grandfather and that meeting so many years ago.

'Then in 1981 they made another law. Every house had to have a permit to get services. We didn't have a permit. So we wrote letters. And more letters. We were very naive. By 1985 we realized that the Government did not want to give us services because they didn't want us to be there. In 1986 they put a demolition order on seven houses, and we had to forget about services and start a new struggle to stop the houses being bulldozed. We just wanted to be left alone...'

But Muhammed Abu El Haija was not about to give up.

'It took until 1990 to stop the order. By this time I had qualified as an electrical engineer and was working in council planning. We heard of other places under demolition orders. With two other guys I travelled from village to village. Those were long days and long nights, sometimes sleeping on the road. In the end we found 90,000 people living in the same way in villages without services. So we had the idea to band together and get the villages recognized.

'It is a funny thing, this word "recognition". I am not recognized, my village is not recognized. And yet I have a passport, I have an identity card which says I am an Israeli. I speak Hebrew better than Arabic. "No, you are not recognized so we cannot deal with you," they say. "We cannot give you services."

'It is a funny thing, this word "recognition". I am not recognized, my village is not recognized. And yet I have an identity card which says I am an Israeli. I speak Hebrew better than Arabic'

'We called ourselves the Association of 40, referring to 40 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By 1992 we had our own plan – we had grouped some of the villages in the north of the country and asked for nine to be recognized. By 1994 the Labour Government had formally agreed to recognize eight, including Ain Hod. But then they lost the election.'

The Association of 40 were back to square one. 'You see, we live in a beautiful area and they don't want to give it to the Arabs. There are right-wing political parties who want to move us from where we are on the mountainside down into the valley. They want a military post on the mountain. If we are moved into the valley it will be our grave. Down there, we cannot see the sun. No sun in our sunny country...'

His voice is sombre now. 'So I am here in Britain. Israel is sensitive to pressure from outside. We understand this now. I have come to Britain first because Britain was where the problems started for the Arabs who live in the State of Israel. There are a million Arabs who are citizens of Israel – 25 per cent of the Palestinians in the world. We are only asking to be given the same rights as everyone else. The Palestinian State has made no difference to me. I don't want to live there. I want to live here. But I do want to be an equal citizen. And if I have to walk to Geneva and then walk home to get this, then that is what I will do.' And Muhammed Abu El Haija squares his shoulders, sets his face in a determined frown and then grins at me. ■

Reviews

music

Encuentro Entre Soneros

by **Papi Oviedo** *(Tumi CD 070)*

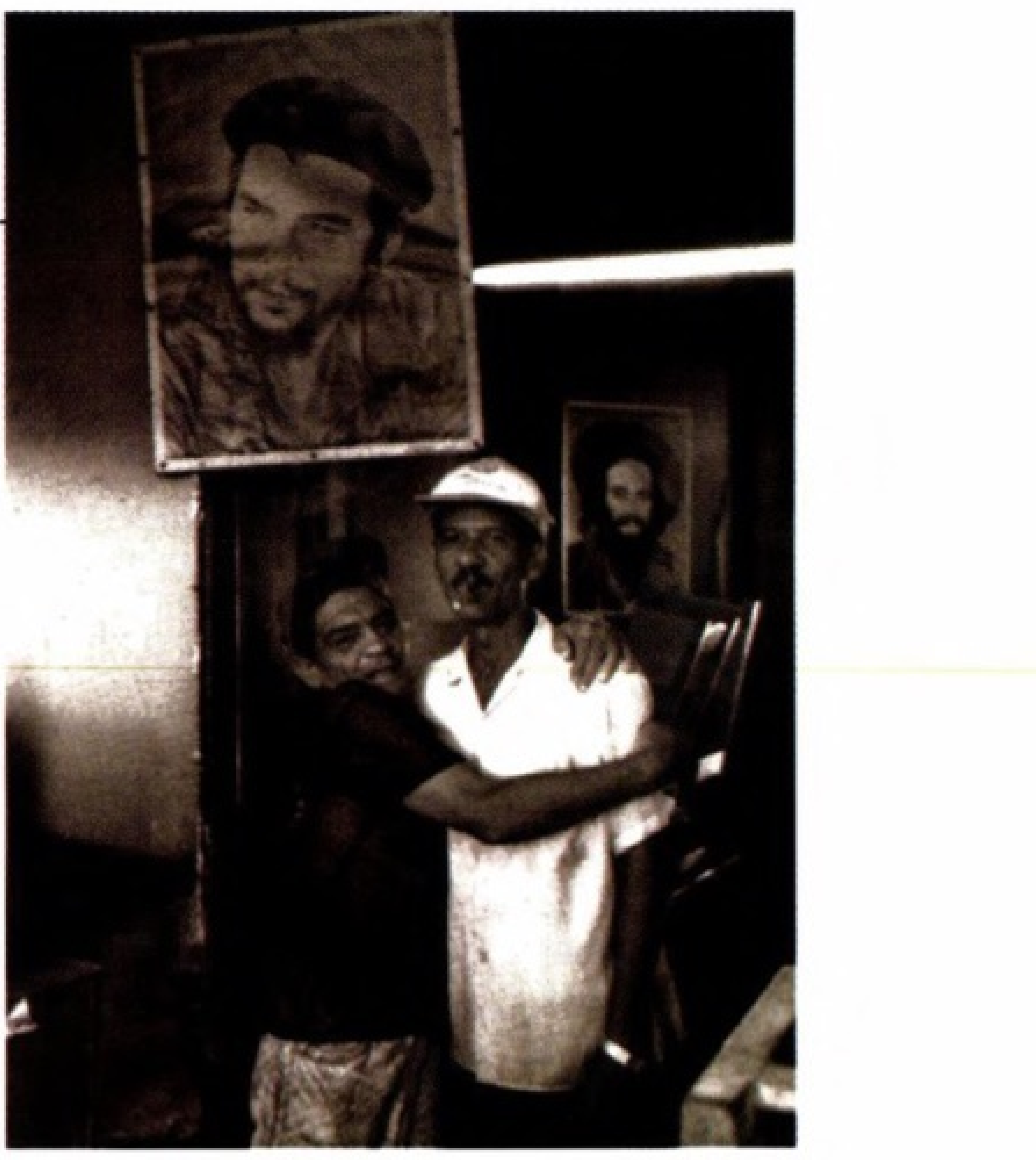
Hasta Siempre Comandante

by **Various** *(TUMI CD 077)*

Just as rum is the base of Caribbean cocktails, so is Cuban *son* at the root of salsa, the vibrant, multi-hued dance music that fills the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. **Encuentro Entre Soneros** – a meeting of *son* aficionados or *soneros* is something of a late comer. Released by Papi Oviedo as his debut album at the grand old age of 63, **Encuentro** is a wonderful piece of listening. Gilberto Pai Oviedo's instrument is the *tres*, the Cuban guitar whose three pairs of double strings gives the instrument its distinctly varied sound. He began his career as a boy in Havana, helping his father a master of the *tres*. Oviedo Junior branched out in the early 1940s – the heyday of salsa and he went on to play with such luminaries as Enrique Perez, Conjuncto Chocolate and Elio Reve.

This album's great strength lies in the manner in which it displays so many *son* styles of the past decades. Its 13 songs – all of which feature guest artists and singers in addition to Oviedo and his core band – take us through classic *son*, *Afro-son* (courtesy of Oviedo Senior), *guarachero-son*, and *bolero*. At times, Oviedo's music has a delicious retro feel which always gives way to the lively cross-rhythms beaten out by a fine percussion section and punctuated by the trumpet blasts of José and Julian Martinez. In all, perfect music for an endless party.

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆
Politics ☆☆☆



One of the Cuban revolution's most charismatic figures was, of course, Che Guevara. Not surprisingly, the cigar-toting guerrilla inspired many songs, 13 of which are included on the recently released commemorative album, **Hasta Siempre Comandante**. They range from the lugubriousness of the magnificent Elena Burke's deep-throated offering, through the exhortational 'Che Comandante' from Cacique Paraguayo, to the downright fawning of Grupo 5U4. Their lines extolling Che's 'divine presence' might be considered slightly suspect. Nevertheless, the album manages to be both an interesting historical document (it contains original recordings of Fidel Castro reading Che's letters to crowds in 1965) as well as being substantially entertaining.

Entertainment ☆☆☆
Politics ☆☆☆

LG

books

Walking in the Shade:
Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949-1962

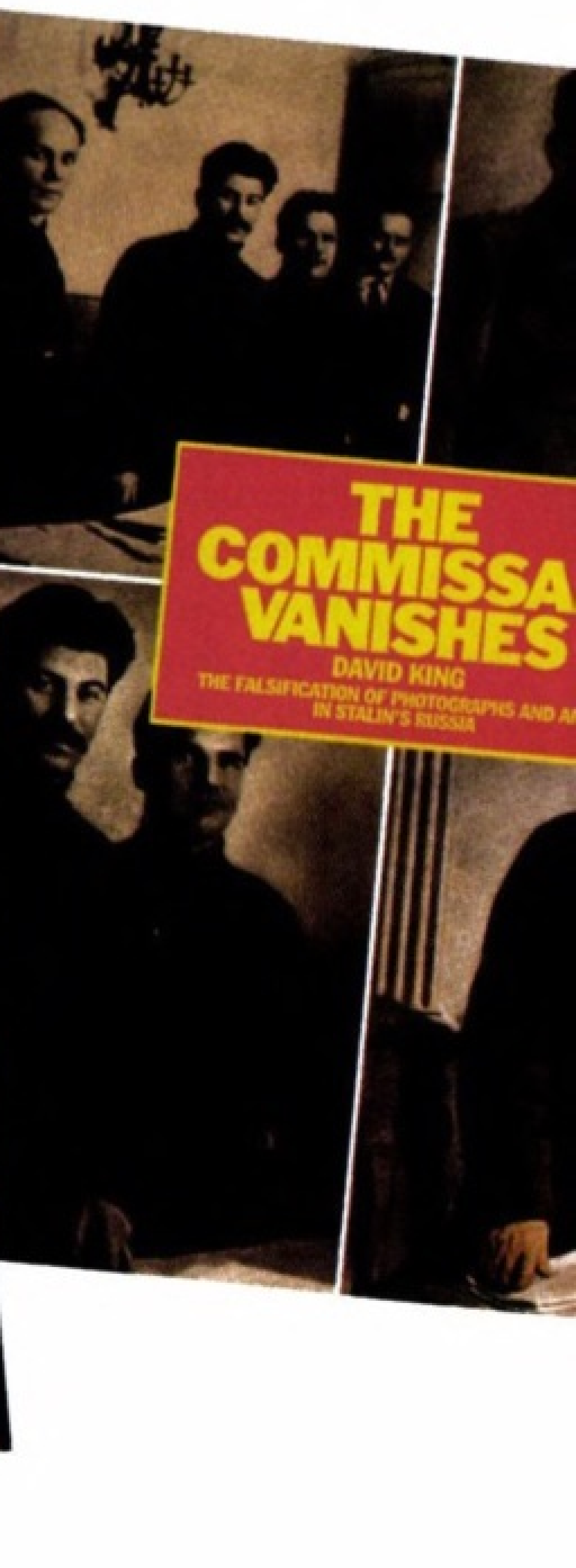
by **Doris Lessing** (*HarperCollins, ISBN 0-00-255861-0*)

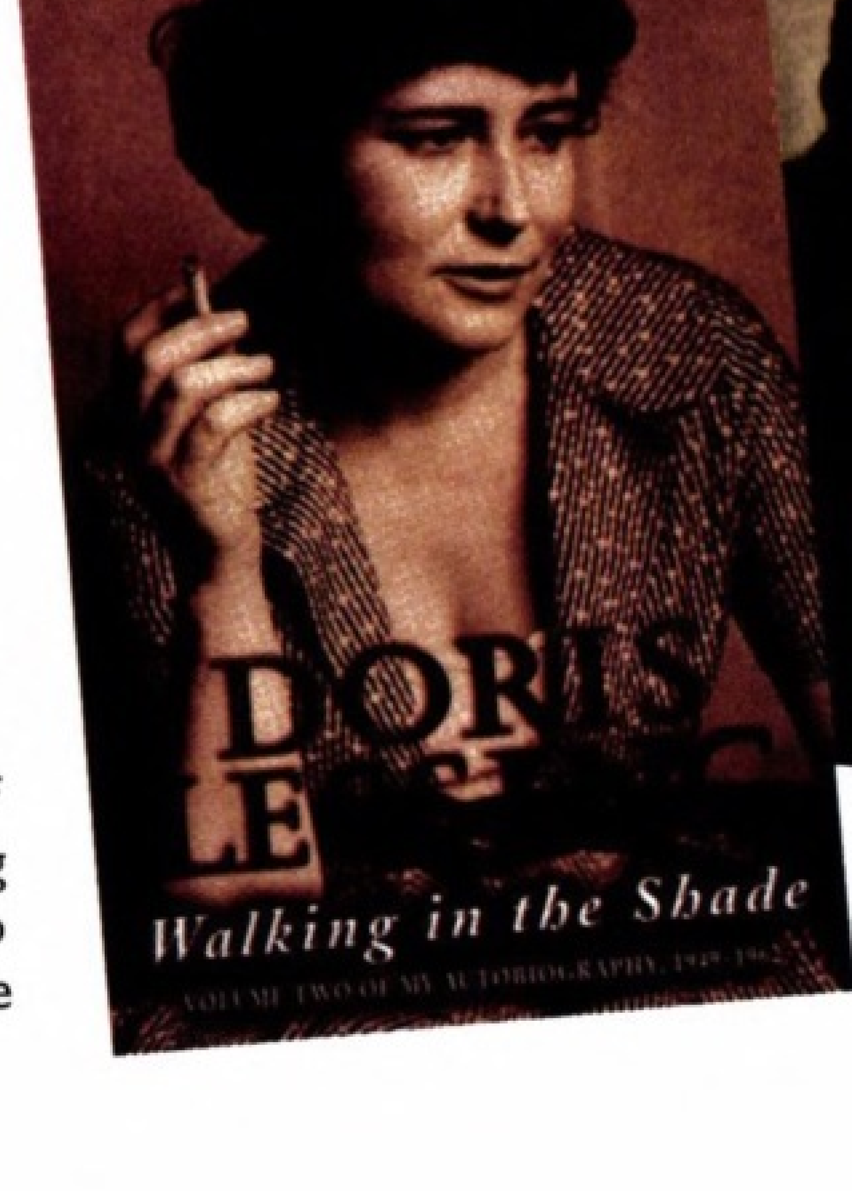
The Commissar Vanishes

by **David King** *(Canongate Books, Edinburgh ISBN 0-86241-724-4. US publisher, Metropolitan Books)*

Doris Lessing's first volume of autobiography *Under My Skin* came in for a lot of critical flak for its honest depiction of the difficult choices she made when she came to England from Africa. Her decision to leave two children behind and her reticence over the emotions involved in the separation were seen as coldly calculating. Her answer to this charge: 'it seemed to me obvious that I was bound to be unhappy and any intelligent reader would understand that without ritual beatings of the breast' is a neat summation of what autobiography is for Doris Lessing – a delicate balance between intellectual analysis and emotional reserve. **Walking in the Shade** begins in 1949 with Doris, aged 30, arriving in a grim, monochrome post-war Britain. Her first novel *The Grass is Singing* has been accepted by a publisher and she and her small son settle into a London flat. Her early forays into artistic and literary circles are tempered by the demands of a very active child and the need to make a living; all the familiar drudgery of single-parenthood are accurately described here but without a drop of self-pity. Gradually Doris, who had been a Communist Party member in Rhodesia, began attending political meetings and demonstrations and although deeply sceptical of claims of a Soviet utopia joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in the early 1950s. Her vivid autopsy on the vanished convictions and vain struggles of those days is one of the book's strengths and her answers to the oft-asked question as to how a generation could have supported Stalin and justified the unjustifiable are complex, convincing and unblinkingly honest. Many luminaries of the intellectual Left crop up – Naomi Mitchison, EP Thompson, Clancy Sigal, Bertrand Russell – but simply as people she knew, never as names to be dropped. As a vivid account of the Cold War mentality of the 1950s and 1960s and of her personal odyssey through CND and the Communist Party – which she left in 1956 – this book could hardly be bettered. She captures the tang of the times and she can be very funny. There are some wonderful passages about the nature of a writing life. Having begun by saying that a writer's typical day is too dull to describe, she then evokes brilliantly the 'daily routine of procrastination, wool-gathering, the low-level depression that feeds creativity'. Lessing seems genuinely bewildered at the success and influence some of her books have had; her best known work, *The Golden Notebook* she considers to have been something of a failure!

What comes over most in this uncompromising book is the way Doris Lessing has preserved and protected her intellectual independence. Prickly, proudly rational and scornful of



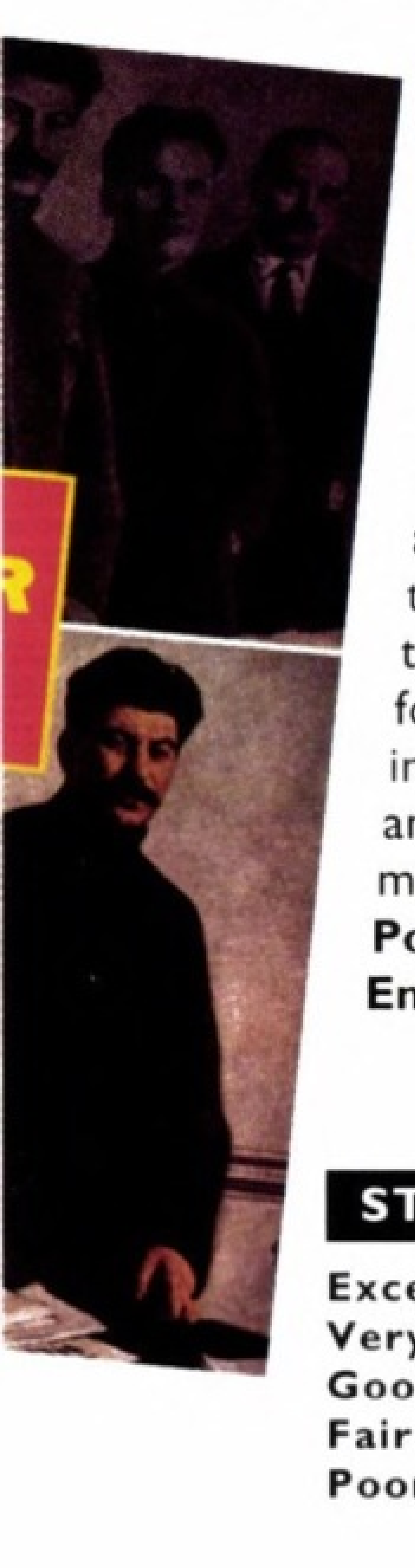


the cheap line or the shoddy argument, she is triumphantly her own woman, celebrating her mistakes and shortcomings as resolutely and as tenaciously as her achievements.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainmen ☆☆☆☆ PW

'Under Stalin's regime... photographs lied. In David King's book, the same photographs, their original images restored, speak volumes of truth,' writes Professor Stephen Cohen in his preface to **The Commisar Vanishes: the falsification of photographs and art in Stalin's Russia**. It took photo-historian David King 30 years to build up the extraordinary, chilling archive on which this book is based. The result is a picture-book that tells the story of the darkest decades of the Soviet Union more sharply than reams of text ever could. Stalin not only rewrote history, he also had it visually transformed, faking images to make himself a key player in the Revolution and falsifying a closeness with Lenin that never existed. More sinister though was the way in which he got his propagandists, using airbrushing and cutting-and-pasting techniques, to remove from visual record those he sentenced to death or the gulags. The names of those whom he had arrested or 'disappeared' could no longer be mentioned, nor could pictures be kept without the greatest risk of arrest. Even family albums were not safe, with relatives hacking out images of a lost father or mother, brother or sister. Some of the most haunting images are those from artist and photographer Alexander Rodchenko's own copy of a book of photographs he produced called *Ten Years of Uzbekistan*. Three years later, in 1937, Stalin purged the Uzbek leadership with the result that many of the official portraits of party functionaries in the album had to be destroyed. Rodchenko did this so crudely that the resulting images subversively express the brutality and violence of what actually happened to these victims of Stalin's Great Terror; the defacements became almost works of art in themselves.



This book is quite clearly about a particular and extreme time and place in history. But advances in computer software which invisibly alter photographs, combined with the perennial problem that power tends to corrupt, leave little room for complacency. Photographic images are alarmingly manipulable – and we remain alarmingly easily manipulated by them.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆ VB

STAR RATING	
Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

THE CLASSIC

Letters

...being earth songs from a true pioneer.

WORLD music has become such a compromised beast. Cross-cultural fun has turned into aural salve. Increasingly it gets marketed in forms digestible to Western audiences, which have less to do with a meeting of musical minds than considerations of lushness, feelgood potential, and track length. Admittedly artists of integrity do shine through with their distinctive voices no matter what the studio treatment, but largely we as consumers get what we expect, sunshine on CD from Africa, salsa fire from South America, floating haunt-stuff from Scandinavia. Occasionally anomalies may bother us – such as when artists from nations with the most hideous political situations churn out the dippy happy vibe, or when translated lyrics sit uneasily with our own values. For me the packaging of culture in tidy portions is the most serious consequence.

SAINKHO NAMCHYLAK
LETTERS

So it's all the more rewarding that the glorious voice of Tuvan singer Sainkho Namchylak cuts through cosy categories and moves all the goal posts in its dramatic experimentation. At the beginning of her career she performed the traditional shamanic music of her southern Siberian homeland, but disguised as pop music because the Soviet authorities discouraged shamanic practice. A stance that could be viewed as subversion, compromise, or possibly a bit of both.

Since then she has taken full control of the direction of her music and broken out of the ethno-exotica trappings that have often claimed 'foreign' singers with great voices. Such as Yma Sumac, the Peruvian with a glass-shattering range, whose stunning improvisations never received any copyright credit.

Tuva, a land of stamp-collectors' dreams, is flavour of the month with exotica fans. And even though classically trained – Namchylak is one of the few women accomplished in Tuvan overtone singing – she follows her own unique musical vision. Her rise in so-called Improv circles has been phenomenal, but here too she is breaking the rules of this supposedly free terrain. As a vocalist she refuses to be a mere pendant to the male-dominated scene's instrumentalists. She is unafraid of melody and emotion (always suspicious to musical 'radicals'), and incorporates ancient singing techniques into her compositions.

Letters (1993) is a stirring testament to the territory she has carved out. Collaborating with some of Improv's brightest – Joelle Leandre (bass), Mats Gustaffson (sax), Sten Sandell (piano) – Namchylak seems intent on voicing the entire gamut of human emotion. The album sleeve contains letters from Sainkho to her beloved father, who died in 1992. She recounts the hubbub of travel between events, a dismal performance before a tiny, unappreciative audience at a prestigious jazz festival, her embarrassment at being introduced to a living legend not having heard his work. 'Because I couldn't speak English I was like a fish out of water offstage. I could only gesticulate with my hands or nod with my head.' Elsewhere she has spoken of the loneliness of being an improviser with an Asian logic who usually works with musicians from Western traditions. In the corresponding tracks Namchylak tries out an unsure little voice, overtaken by a squabble of styles, eventually resolved in long honeyed phrases.

One of the letters is from her father, concerned whether he has been a good parent, wondering when she will find a partner. This solo track begins with an impossibly low sub-bass drone that turns the entire room into a giant larynx, a veil of skin through which the wind seems to pass. It is a kind of wise grumbling, seismic yet intimate. Later comes throat work of such visceral intensity that one expects shreds of flesh to come flying out of the speakers.

The tracks are journeys, shamanic voicings of people, rocks, trees, winds, a distant tapping in a far-off cave, a desire to be in time and out of time. On Letter 5, the spectral piano of Sten Sandell perfectly complements a fragile yet immaculately realized meditation on remembrance and loss. Letter 6 contains a statement of intent: 'I am beginning to comprehend my real role in this world. I think that I am a necessary connecting link in the chain of cultural continuity between the past and the future, between the people of the East and the West. Like an antenna, tuned to a certain frequency, I perceive ideas in the form of images and thoughts and I believe in their realization. The basis of these ideas is the community of people, their historic continuity, expressed in music, in my singing.'

The final track is just a few seconds long, the voice sweet, uncertain, lost, a child searching for its parent. It's a necessary, very human postscript to Namchylak's journeys to the frontiers of sound. She is a true pioneer, a one-off, using her vast palette and virtuosic technique to convey visions. That she manages so well without words is her singular achievement. ■

Dinyar Godrej

Letters by **Sainkho Namchylak** is available on CD through Leo Records (LR 190).

Reviews continued

film

Funny Games
by Michael Haneke

This film sets out to stoke controversy. The first Austrian movie to show at Cannes for 35 years, and the third in director Michael Haneke's trilogy about the media and violence, it's a sparse, elegant, psychological thriller in which two killers shatter the well-oiled life of a middle class couple for no explained motive. Yet **Funny Games** is no standard thriller. It's a knowing, only partly ironic exercise in provoking its audience to query the part they play in consuming and perpetuating screen violence.

The first intimation of traumas ahead comes in the pre-title sequence as Anne (Susanne Lothar) and Georg (Ulrich Mühe) and their young son Georgie (Stephan Clapczynski) drive alongside a mountain lake to their holiday home, the strains of Mozart piping decorously through the car stereo. As they test each other's knowledge of opera, a sudden thrash of metal music warns the audience of the family's impending disaster.

It arrives in the shape of two preppy looking, white-clad young men, apparently guests of their neighbours. One of them, Peter (Frank Giering), appears unexpectedly in the family's immaculate kitchen, asking Anne to lend her neighbour some eggs. She is at first discomfited by his extreme politeness and then thoroughly unnerved by the menacing intent behind it. But he is soon joined by Paul (Arno Frisch), thinner, cleverer, more malevolent, and just as chillingly polite. Before long, Paul has struck and disabled Georg's leg with a golf club, entrapped the family, and embarked on the first of his sadistic little games, culminating, he warns them, in death within 12 hours.

Very little actual violence is shown on screen. Brutality is suggested through sounds though the terror is inscribed on faces, forcing the viewer to participate actively in the characters' suffering. During the first fatality the camera remains in the kitchen while Paul makes a sandwich. There is an aching clarity, a bleached cosiness to the cinematography. The acting, particularly Susan Lothar's harrowed intensity and young Georgie's vulnerability, is sometimes too painful to watch.

As with other parts of his trilogy Haneke makes no attempt to provide psychological or sociological motivations for his characters. Part of his plan is to force viewers to confront the suffering involved in real rather than screen violence, by drawing attention to the way cinema and television routinely mitigate its impact. Self-consciously alluding to the film's fictional status he invokes the audience's voyeuristic participation by having Paul turn to the camera at intervals and wink. At one point he even picks up the television remote control and rewinds an entire sequence which he deems has temporarily slipped out of his power.

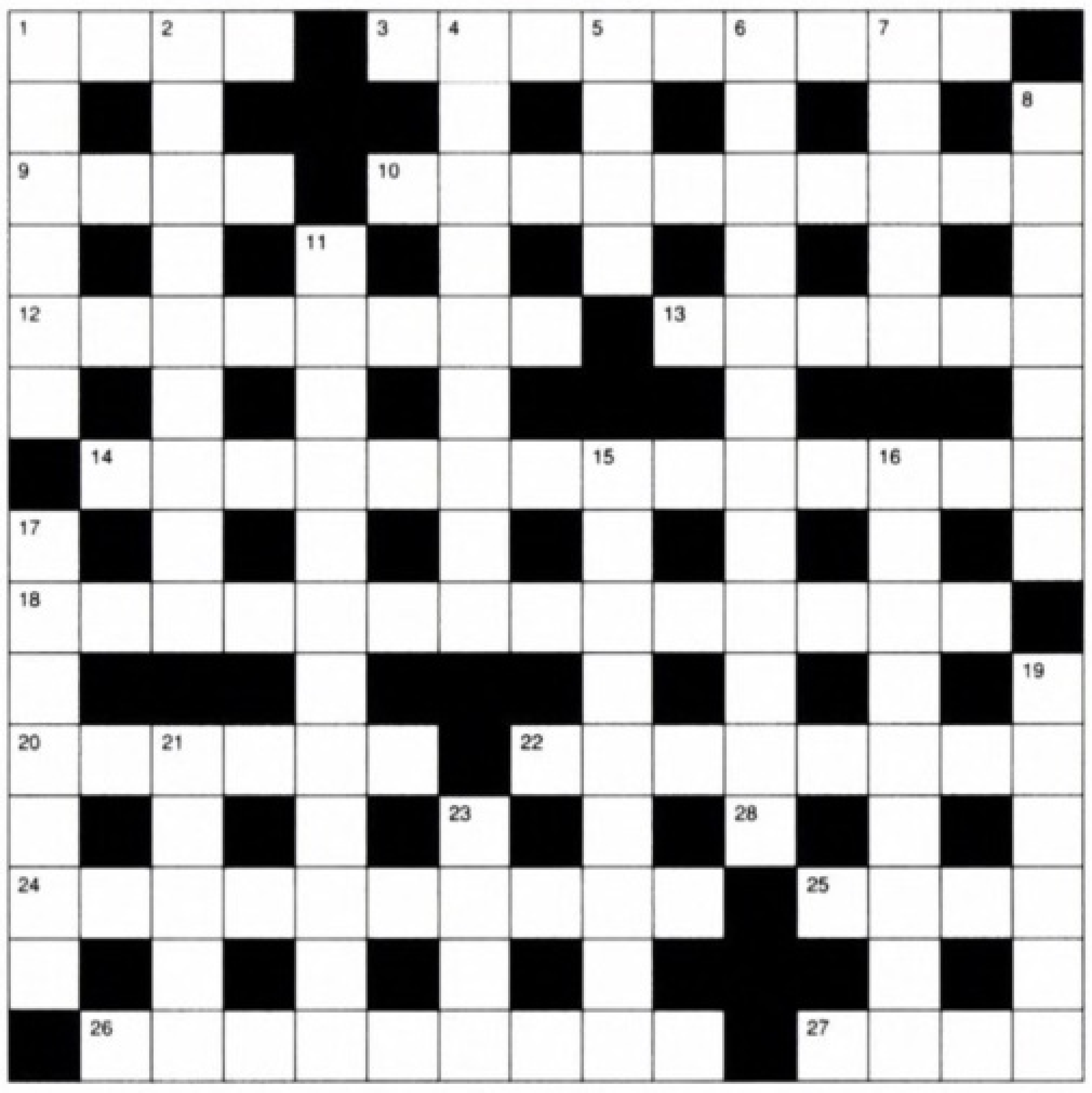
Haneke has stated that he wants to take cinema away from its slavish adherence to the rules of storytelling – the illusion of reality – and make it a more critical activity. **Funny Games** certainly does that.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ EE

Reviewers: Peter Whittaker, Louise Gray, Esi Eshun, Vanessa Baird

The NI Crossword

No. 19 by Axe



CRYPTIC

Across

- **1** Firm way of doing things for Italian town (4)
- **3** Sea-bird makes Azores, setting out south-east and becoming disorientated at headland (9)
- **9** The Shetlands' shout! (4)
- **10** Plant the comic hit – hiss! – into trio which doesn't have a hard character (6,4)
- **12** American system of birthday and anniversary celebrations? (3-5)
- **13** Sound channel (6)
- **14** Prudish Walesa, incognito, identified embracing Virginia and politician – a mess of the first order! (9,5)
- **18** Part of 16 to dismantle or deregulate, if ... (6,3,5)
- **20** ... state in-state appeal (6)
- **22** Test place has container (returned Greek letter says) for alpine plant (8)
- **24** BritishTelecom, not France Telecom, prevailing in Canada, perhaps! (10)
- **25** Mozart symphony written in, let's see, between leaving Basel and entering Zurich (4)
- **26** Contra to the thinking in Nicaragua? (9)
- **27** Trick ninja to release northern Buddhist (4)

Down

- **1** The wolf is shy over on-target earnings (6)
- **2** Old Prime Minister – Victoria's first! (9)
- **4** Hated pair now reformed in South Africa (9)
- **5** Circle above poor derelict tree in 16 (4)
- **6** It crawled from the 14 and outran us, unfortunately, with the little brothers about (12)
- **7** Spanish poet from Ciudad Real or Cadiz – no, near Cartagena! (5)
- **8** Post Office below stage camouflaged for police (7)
- **11** The Secretary-General – he acts badly and spoils King John first – over the hill (12)
- **15** A day for hagiolaters' hedge-betting? (3,6)
- **16** Turner finally sends negative back to the Royal Academy. What a state! (9)
- **17** Canadian weary, returning at meeting first two Toronto characters (7)
- **19** Scipio's battle turned on its head on seeing great river (6)
- **21** South African bay from where the Spanish went back to Portuguese India (5)
- **23** Inn fit for an Asian prince? (4)

QUICK

Across

- **1** One of the Italian Lakes (4)
- **3** Sea-bird, a member of the auk family (9)
- **9** The second-largest of the Shetland Islands (4)
- **10** Misnomer for woody grass of South-East Asia (6,4)
- **12** A non-autocratic political system, for example (3-5)
- **13** Bering or Molucca? (6)
- **14** The chaos of Creation (9,5)
- **18** Land at the southern end of the Americas ... (6,3,5)
- **20** ... and at the northern end (6)
- **22** Yellow-flowering plant of the pea family with poisonous seeds (8)
- **24** An English speaker where English is not the only language (10)
- **25** Capital of Upper Austria (4)
- **26** Philosophy of the left-wing in Nicaragua (9)
- **27** Member of a strict Buddhist sect (4)

Down

- **1** North American prairie wolf (6)
- **2** Australia's second-largest city (9)
- **4** Term coined by SABRA in the 1930s and adopted as policy in 1948 (9)
- **5** Tree, species Phytolacca, native to the pampas (4)
- **6** Former technical name of the Apatosaurus genus (12)
- **7** Murcian city (and Spanish poet, assassinated in the Civil War by Franco's forces) (5)
- **8** Organization founded by Goering in 1933 and outlawed in 1946 (7)
- **11** Swedish UN Secretary-General, 1953-61 (12)
- **15** Day after Halloween (3, 6)
- **16** South America's second most populated country (9)
- **17** Citizen of Canada's capital (7)
- **19** Legendary female warrior (6)
- **21** Bay which protects the city and harbour of Port Elizabeth (5)
- **23** Ghulam Ishaq ——, President of Pakistan,1988-93 (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

W	■	A	■	■	V	E	L	V	E	T	D	I	V	O	R	C	E	■	■	■
A	I	N	U	■	E	■	Y	■	S	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	S	■	I	■
T	■	C	■	A	N	G	O	S	T	U	R	A	■	S	M	O	K	I	N	G
E	C	H	O	■	E	■	N	■	H	■	W	■	G	■	E	■	I	■	T	■
R	■	O	■	■	Z	■	■	P	E	R	I	G	O	R	D	■	M	E	E	R
W	U	R	Z	B	U	R	G	■	R	■	N	■	T	■	I	■	O	■	R	■
A	■	A	■	■	E	■	■	■	■	L	I	T	H	U	A	N	I	A	N	S
Y	U	G	O	S	L	A	V	■	C	■	S	■	■	■	E	■	N	■	E	■
S	■	E	■	■	A	■	I	Q	U	I	T	O	S	■	V	A	U	L	T	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Z	■	B	■	■	■	O	■	A	■	I	■	■	■
T	H	E	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N	R	E	V	O	L	U	T	I	O	N
■	■	■	R	■	V	■	E	■	■	■	A	■	I	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	M	E	C	C	A	■	R	O	M	A	N	C	E	■	D	■	■	F	■	B
■	O	■	H	■	N	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	T	H	E	S	S	A	L	Y
H	A	G	I	O	G	R	A	P	H	A	■	■	■	■	V	■	■	L	■	Z
■	B	■	P	■	E	■	S	■	A	■	E	■	S	L	O	V	A	K	I	A
F	I	F	E	■	L	A	T	E	R	I	T	E	■	■	T	■	■	L	■	N
■	T	■	L	■	I	■	I	■	I	■	H	■	K	■	I	■	T	A	F	T
P	E	N	A	N	C	E	■	A	S	I	A	M	I	N	O	R	■	N	■	I
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Prejudice

The Romanies of Central Europe have lived through a long history of persecution. **David Vaughan** argues that their recent treatment as asylum seekers in Britain is little better.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL in Prague recently screened *Cathy Come Home*, Ken Loach's influential film from the 1960s. The film's portrayal of how a family gradually becomes homeless and destitute is a vivid illustration of what can happen when a country's social-support mechanisms fail to work.

'It seems a long time ago,' a friend said as we came out, but again and again during the film I had a vivid sense of familiarity. I had just come back from a few days staying among Romany families in the industrial city of Ostrava in the far-eastern corner of the Czech Republic.

Dozens of families are homeless, living in shelters after the most devastating floods this century swept through their homes in July. All of them have stories of how, in a matter of minutes, the waters appeared from nowhere and took everything with them. Nearly all Ostrava's other families have already been rehoused, but not so the Romanies. The local deputy mayor Petr Kudela, who is in charge of housing, told me why quite openly. Local authorities are not prepared to allocate their scarce flats to Romany families. Mr Kudela was laughed out of the room when he suggested to a neighbouring authority that it might consider offering flats to Romany families from his part of the city. 'You're not going to unload your gypsies on us,' he was told.

Although the Czech Republic is in many ways a liberal, easy-going country, the idea that minorities have the right to be different is not widely accepted. Not long ago I went to lunch with a colleague, a university professor and his wife, a primary-school teacher. As we sat in their garden, enjoying the summer sun and freshly picked vegetables, the subject turned to what in the Czech Republic is universally known as the 'gypsy problem'. 'Their brains are different,' I was informed, 'they'll never adapt to our ways and there's no place for them in our country.'

The depth of Central European prejudice against the Romany minority often shocks British sensibilities. But events have proved that in Britain things are no better. Over 30 years after *Cathy Come Home*, men are still being forcibly separated from their families. On applying for asylum in Dover many Czech and Slovak Romany families were broken up, and the men were put in custody in Rochester Prison. They had committed no crime. These people were, after all, 'gypsies' and, in the words of a Home Office press release, 'the worst enemy of the genuine asylum seeker'. Another press release stated: 'Shoplifting is no way to repay the British tax payer', in a tone that wholeheartedly embraced the traditional stereotype of gypsies as thieves. In fact Dover police have recorded no increase in the percentage of crimes committed by non-British nationals since the Romanies arrived.

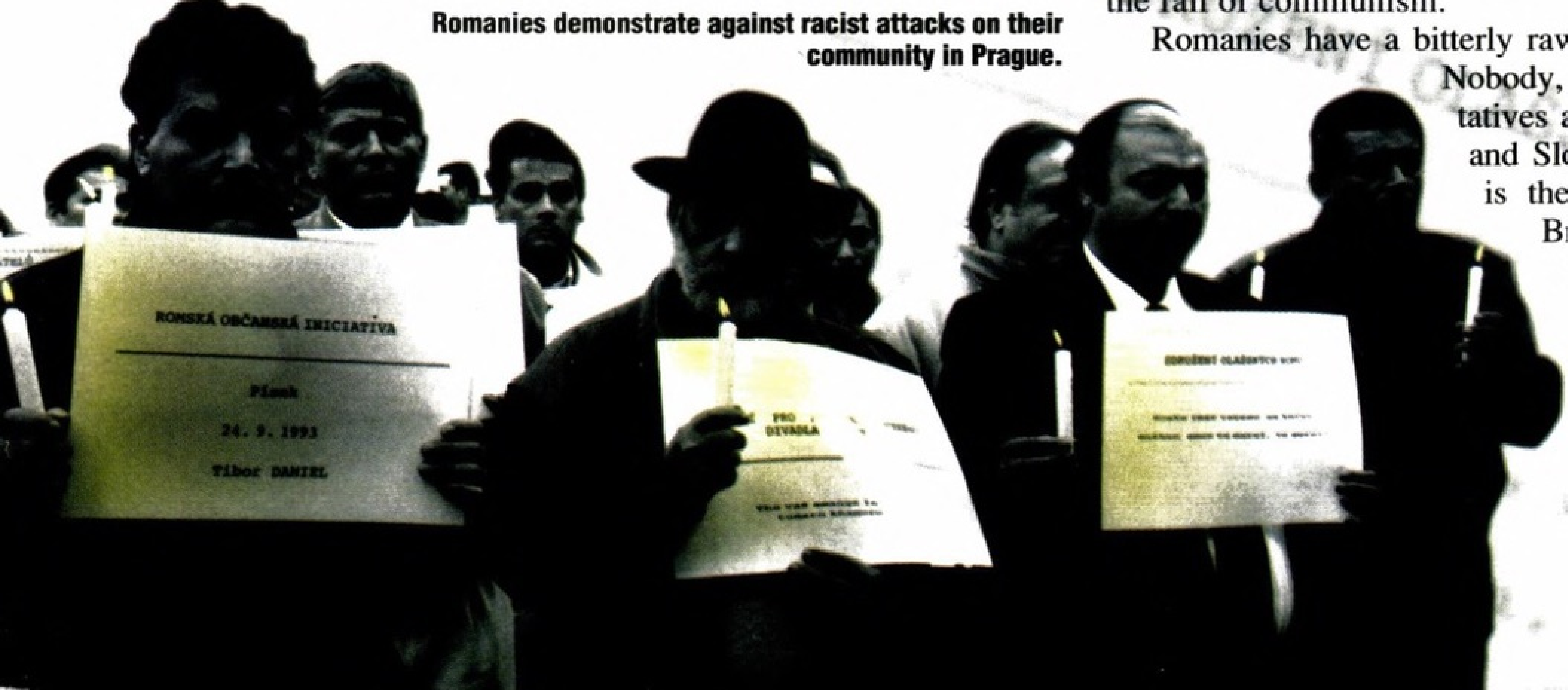
Home Office press releases are scattered with such words as 'unfounded', 'bogus', 'meritless' and 'racketeer'. As proof, immigration authorities have pointed to the similarity of people's stories as evidence of 'organized criminal rackets'. In their view these criminal rackets feed the asylum seekers with invented stories carefully calculated to arouse sympathy. Such charges miss the point entirely. These people – few of whom are highly educated or verbally articulate – are arriving in a foreign land with a language they do not speak, and have no idea what people want them to say, what is expected of them, what is the magic formula that will open the door. A third-generation American Jewish friend of mine once told me how he came to have the name Berg. As his grandfather got off the boat in New York, the man in front of him said his name was Berg. He was let straight in. Jon's grandfather tried the same, and it worked. A bogus claim if ever I heard one, but should he have been sent back to Nazi Germany?

The tone of the British authorities' response to the 'flood of gypsies' (a 'flood' which in reality never amounted to more than a few hundred people) has changed Britain's image in the Czech Republic. Some Czechs – like the senior Prague police officer I recently spoke with who said that 'Romanies are genetically more likely to commit crimes than other Czechs' – see Britain's 'anti-gypsy' stance as a justification of their prejudice. Those Czechs and Romanies who have been trying to battle against prejudice and improve Czech-Romany relations have responded with despair.

I translated one particularly venomous speech made by Immigration Minister Mike O'Brien for a young Romany colleague from Czech Radio. When I saw her expression I wished I had kept it to myself. And I should stress that Britain's anti-Romany tone has not been echoed in Canada, which has also been the destination of many Romanies seeking asylum.

A quick glance into recent European history should be enough to remind us why such behaviour is so deeply offensive. Just 55 years ago the Romanies were being sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz because of the colour of their skin; just ten years ago Romany women throughout Central Europe were being sterilized against their will – sometimes even without their knowledge; just four years ago the Slovak Premier Vladimir Meciar said of the Romanies that it was 'necessary to curtail the extended reproduction of the socially unadaptable and mentally backward population'; just three years ago a 17-year-old boy was drowned in a river by skinheads in the Czech town of Pisek, just a few miles from the World War Two Gypsy concentration camp of Lety. He was one of well-over 20 Romanies who have suffered a similar fate in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since the fall of communism.

Romanies have a bitterly raw deal throughout Central Europe. Nobody, least of all the Romany representatives and leaders in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, feels that mass emigration is the solution to the Romanies' ills. Britain has seriously failed the European continent's largest and most deprived minority. ■



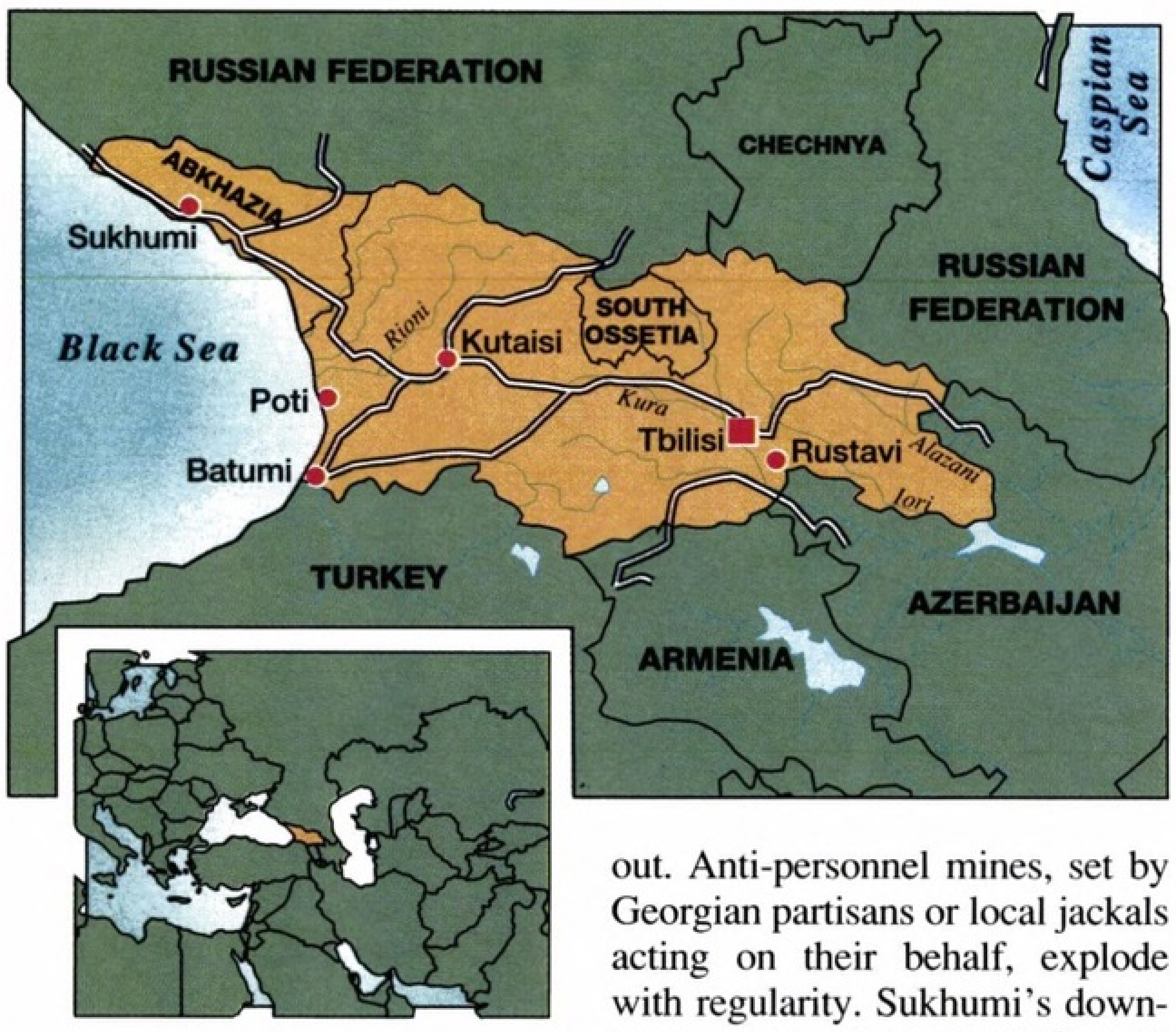
Romanies demonstrate against racist attacks on their community in Prague.

SEAN SPRAGUE / PANOS PICTURES

David Vaughan is a BBC correspondent in Central Europe who has made a number of radio documentaries on the problems faced by Romany minorities.

Country profile

Georgia



GEORGIA may be famous as the land of Stalin's birth, but it boasts a long and fabled history as one of the world's oldest nations. It is also, however, one of the world's most invaded countries – Hittites, Romans, Byzantines, Mongols, Turks, Persians and finally Bolsheviks have all attacked this strategic land along the north coast of the Black Sea, wedged between Russia and Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Absorbed by the Russian Empire at the start of the nineteenth century, Georgia enjoyed a short breath of freedom from 1918 to 1921 but was then subdued by the Red Army and absorbed into the Soviet Union. Following the collapse of the USSR, Georgia declared its independence in April 1991.

But the country's first years of independence have seen a cycle of coups, countercoups and civil war. Only now, almost single-handedly held together by former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, is it emerging as a (relatively) stable member of the world community.

The greatest drag on development has been the conflict over the lush province of Abkhazia on the north coast of the Black Sea. For 13 months, from 1992 to 1993, Georgian and Abkhazian irregulars battled over the future of the region that lay within the Soviet borders of Georgia but sought its own sovereignty. The war took more than 10,000 lives, and forced some 250,000 – mostly ethnic Georgians – to flee their homes in Abkhazia. Aided by Russia and Chechen mercenaries, Abkhazia won.

Today, however, Abkhazia stands alone. No nation has recognized it. Its beaches are bare, its harbors empty and its land cut off – blockaded, stagnant and hungry. By dusk, as residents of the capital, Sukhumi, are quick to warn visitors, it is not safe to venture out. Anti-personnel mines, set by Georgian partisans or local jackals acting on their behalf, explode with regularity. Sukhumi's downtown, once a playground of pastel hotels and eucalyptus-lined esplanades, now resembles the rubble of Kabul.

The Georgian capital of Tbilisi, meanwhile, abounds in the signs of recovery. The nineteenth-century Italianate buildings on its main drag, Rustaveli Street, shelled in the war, have either been rebuilt or levelled. Tbilisi may still lack trustworthy electricity and telephones, but medieval churches are being reconstructed, cafés are full, stores well-stocked; inflation is down, and growth is running at ten-per-cent a year.

Not everyone shares in the recovery. Hundreds of thousands of Georgian refugees who fled Abkhazia four years ago are still camping out or in dormitories, pawns in the political game. Shevardnadze, goaded by a vocal opposition, is open to using force to retake the Gali region of southern Abkhazia, prewar home of nearly all the refugees.

Nevertheless, behind the bluster on both sides, the enemies are talking and there is hope that 'this year will be decisive'. Tbilisi has offered Sukhumi 'maximum autonomy' within a federation, but Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba insists on equal status. 'Federation, confederation, union... whatever you want to call it,' he says. 'But we must be equal.'

There are good reasons for peace. A Georgian port will be the Western outlet of a pipeline delivering oil and gas from the vast reserves of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia – and skirting Russia.

Russia, however, will need to be involved in any peace pact. All parties know that without peace in Abkhazia – and perhaps also in South Ossetia, which also wishes to secede – Georgia cannot move into the next century as a healthy, and truly independent, nation. ■

Andrew Meier

AT A GLANCE

MIA FOSTER

Leader President Eduard Shevardnadze, elected with over 70% of the vote in 1995, having come to power following a coup d'état in 1992.

Economy GNP per capita $580 (Australia $18,000).

Monetary unit: Lari, which replaced the Georgian coupon in October 1995.

Main exports: Exports have been severely limited by the conflict but comprise mainly food crops such as tea, grapes, tobacco and fruit sold to former Soviet republics farther north. Turkey accounted for 26% of Georgia foreign trade in 1995.

People 5.5 million.

Health Infant mortality 22 per 1,000 live births (Japan 4 per 1,000).

Culture Georgians 70%, Armenians 8%, Russians 6%. Among the rest: Abkhazians, Ossetes, Azeris and Adzharians.

Religion: Georgian Orthodox 65%, Muslim 11%, Russian Orthodox 10%, Armenian Orthodox 8%.

Language: Georgian (official), Russian and Abkhazian.

Sources *The World Guide 1997/98; The State of the World's Children 1997; Europe Review 1997.*

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Stores and cafés in Tbilisi are full, but few in Georgia earn more than $100 a month. The old Soviet social safety net is torn beyond repair.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★★
Half the population lives in rural areas, where the majority have some land and livestock. Georgians remain inventive and industrious.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Women in Georgia are at least as well educated as men. But few hold high office or venture into business.

LITERACY ★★★★★
In the last Soviet census, in 1989, Georgia boasted the highest rate of higher education. Education continues to rank among the state's highest concerns.

FREEDOM ★★★
Personal freedom is officially quite broad and the first democratic election in 1995 went smoothly. An independent judiciary is emerging.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★
73 years (compare US 76 years, Russia 68 years). Georgia has a higher life expectancy than any other former Soviet republic.

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★★
The political spectrum could stretch wider to include more open dissent and debate. But given the vagaries of the post-Soviet, post-war Caucasus, the political landscape could certainly be a lot bleaker. Georgia is too dependent on the ageing Shevardnadze, though – and there is no successor on the horizon.

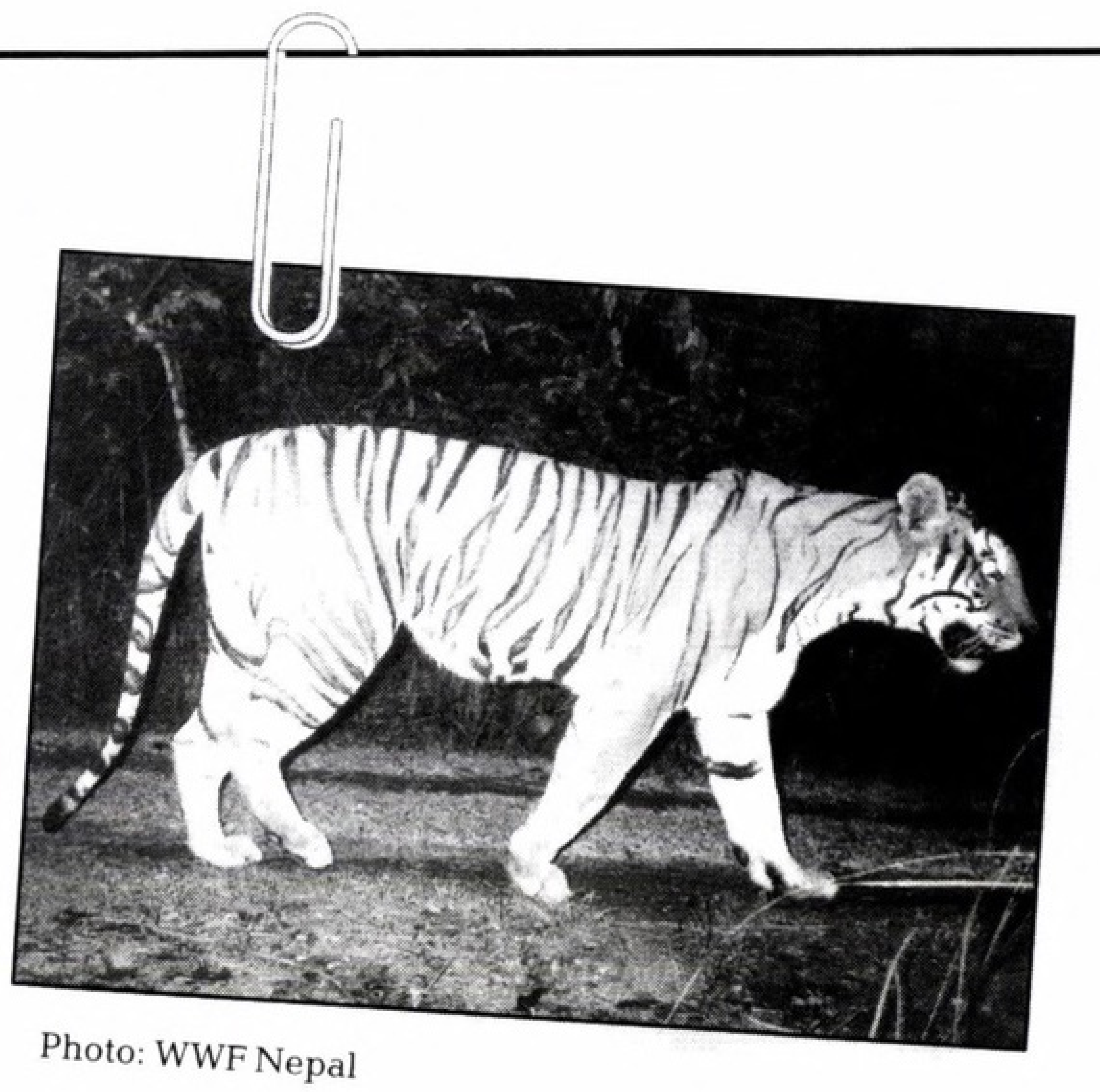


Photo: WWF Nepal

Adoption Papers

Name: **Manau Pothi**
Age: **9**
Sex: **Female**

Adopt a tiger, before it's too late

With as few as 5,000 tigers remaining in the world today, time is quickly running out for this beautiful animal. Manau Pothi is a Bengal tiger living in the Royal Bardia National Park. The park should offer relative safety to Manau Pothi. So far she has been lucky to avoid the threat of poachers that brutally slaughter the tigers for quick profit. Tigers are not only killed for their magnificent striped pelt - their bones are in demand for traditional Chinese medicine used by Asian communities around the world. As the species rapidly decreases, the price for each kill continues to rise.

The poachers aren't Manau Pothi's only enemy. In the last two decades alone, over a million hectares of forest have been lost to industrialisation and agricultural land, which means their food resources are shrinking along with their natural habitat. Without the shelter of their natural environment, the tiger has even less hope for survival - unless we act now.

You can help stop the slaughter of the world's remaining tigers by adopting Manau Pothi, for yourself or a friend

Just £2 a month helps protect Manau Pothi and other tigers from the horrors of poaching. With your support, WWF can fully equip and maintain anti-poaching mobile patrols in Asia and the Russian Far East. By monitoring the tigers, WWF can ensure they live and breed in a safe habitat, a habitat that gives them the chance to re-establish a natural home for themselves.

For adopting Manau Pothi, you'll receive a certificate, a photograph of her, plus quarterly updates on her progress throughout the year.

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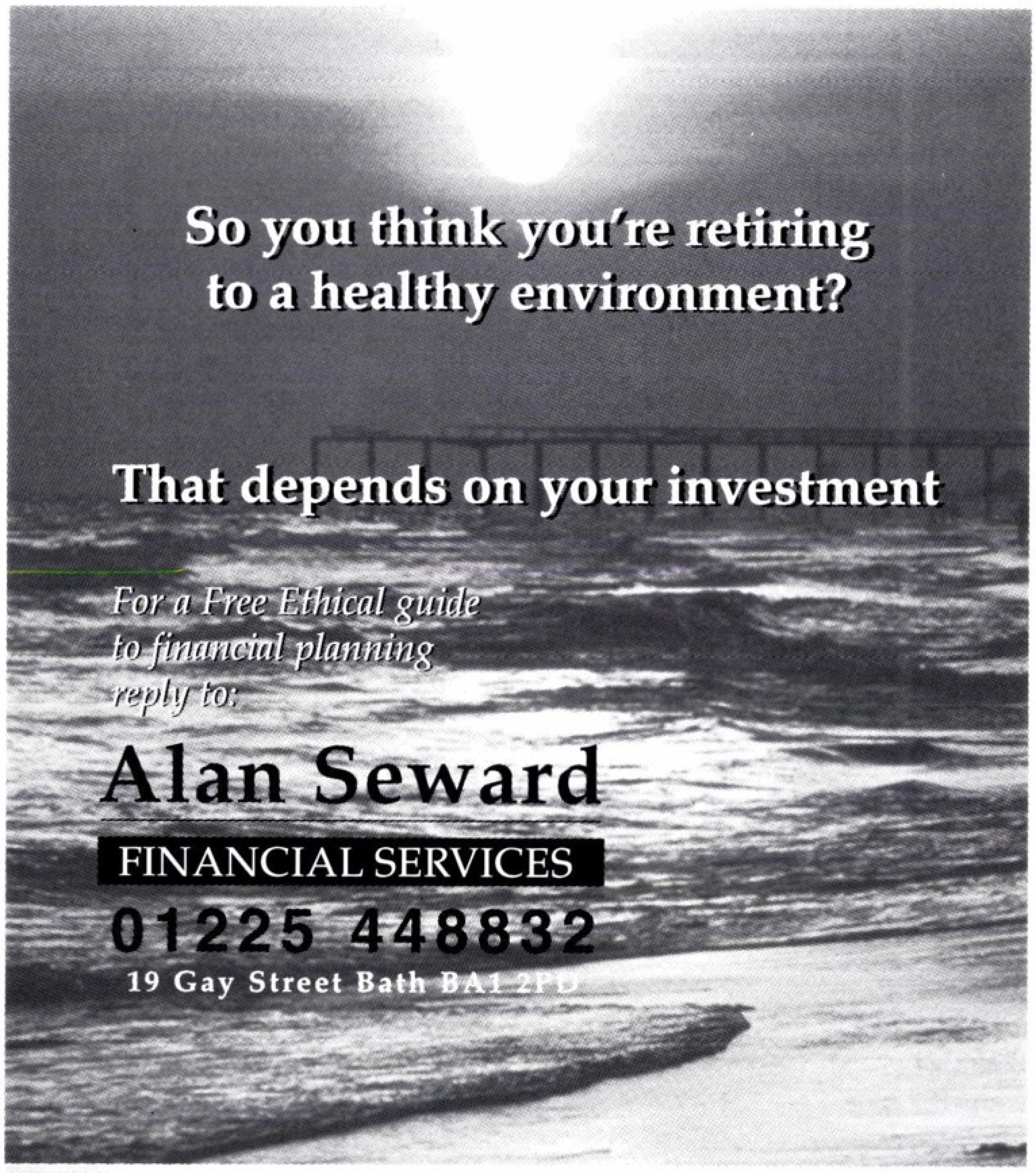
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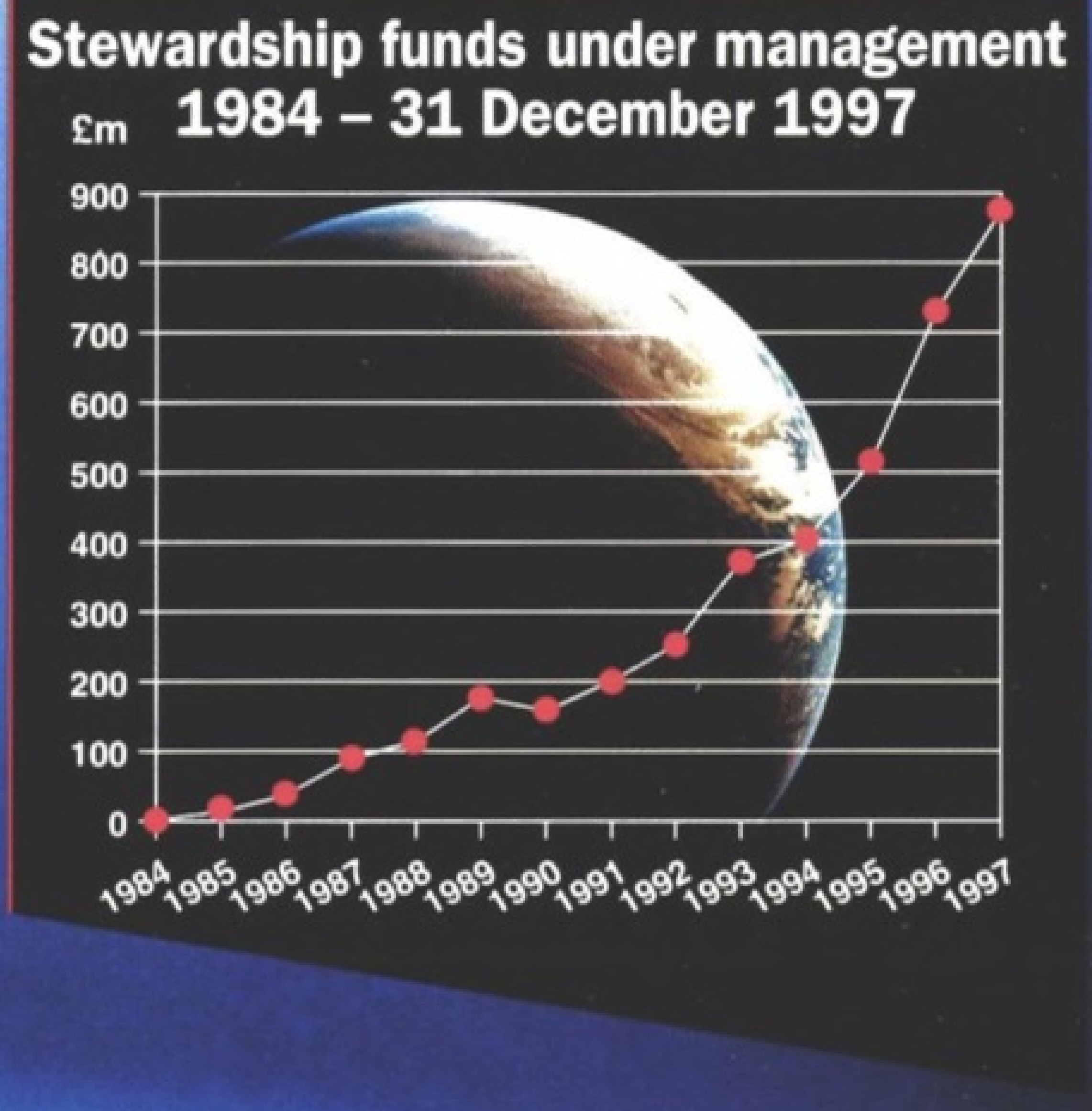
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